THE LIFE OF FRANCIS OF ASSISI

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

PORTRAIT OF BROTHER FRANCIS

In the Church of the Sacro Speco, Subiaco

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

BY

ANNA M. STODDART

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

MY FRIEND AND PASTOR

ROBERT FORMAN HORTON

PREFACE

THIS book is meant to be a popular account of St. Francis of Assisi, of his ideal and his attainment, relieved on a background of history essential to its full understanding. It has no pretension to be a work for students of the period and its most important movement. But it has been written in Rome and Assisi with constant indebtedness to the researches of living Franciscan scholars.

Not only has the writer profited by what M. Paul Sabatier and his colleagues have brought to light, but she has enjoyed the rare advantage of M. Sabatier's personal interest in her work, and of his careful revision of a large portion of her manuscript, and his cordial encouragement. To him her grateful acknowledgment of such priceless stimulus and assistance is first due.

She wishes to thank her friend Miss Pipe and Count Antonio Fiumi, President of the International Society of Franciscan Study, for their valued help in choosing and securing illustrations.

To Signor Oreste Rossi, of the Hotel Subasio, she offers her sincere recognition of his constant kindness in supplying her with local information and in lending her books of the greatest use to her work.

Many other distinguished Assisans helped her in details, and of these she would like to mention here Professor Alessandri, Professor Casali and Father Luigi Fratini.

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FRANCIS OF ASSISI

PART I

HISTORICAL

CHAPTER I

POVERTY AND HOLINESS

Poverty and Holiness—Brahmanic Conception—Begging Students—Abuses—The Sophists—The First Roman Christians—The Hermits—St. Jerome—The Benedictines—In England—Their Decay and Reform—The Augustinians—Influence of the Papacy.

POVERTY and holy living have always been associated in those European and Asiatic civilisations capable of conceiving the spiritual life. "In the wide East, where all wisdom sprung," poverty and holiness were united by an indissoluble tie. No code of morals, no philosophy, no benediction could be received as genuine from men dwelling in luxury, however exalted their office, however eagerly sought their material gifts and influence. The line of demarcation was absolute—the gifts of this world came from its own princes and potentates, the gifts from above from those who had abandoned the things of this world, and, having food and clothing, were content to seek after the spiritual life and

the wisdom that is given to its votaries. Brahmans and Buddhists alike maintained the impossibility of reconciling God and Mammon. If we constrain our minds into an effort to realise what Brahmanism was in its earliest course, we shall find in the still limpid waters of its fountain-head a sense of the presence of God in the sphere of man's obligations, and along with it the experience that this marvellous presence became obscured when men sought wealth, luxury, even comfort—each accession to material well-being acting as a veil fold on fold to blind the spiritual vision.

Thus, the sacred rites which initiated the Brahman novice involved a long period of poverty; without poverty his faculties were inadequate to penetrate the mysteries of spirituality. During many years of study he begged his bread, and others honoured their own domestic life by filling his bowl with rice and adding what could be spared of savoury condiment. It is an indication, too, of the position of women in those remote ages, that he was enjoined to beg from the woman, the mistress of all household economies, not from her husband, whose labour provided them. Some perception there was, before the wide-spread degradation of oriental womanhood, of the greater purity, the more delicate spirituality of the pristine feminine nature.

"*Bhavate Bhiksham Dehi*," the student begged at the door, and there was no taint of squalor, failure, imposture about the words, for it was well understood that he was in his novitiate, learning to

apprehend, to meditate, to preserve his soul in perfect peace, unentangled by the cares of the trivial, workaday, transitory world, for whose help and guidance he was necessary.

The act, indeed, was part of his study, for it assisted him in the toilsome achievement of self-effacement.

The whole custom, revered as it was throughout the civilised East, served as a national endowment of research, perhaps better in its effects upon the nobler students than are the costly colleges of our Western world. Even now, the Brahman has in him a two-fold capacity—that of sharing in the practical life of to-day, profiting by its chances, manipulating its possibilities, rising to wealth, power and political importance, and that of renouncing all these at the call of his spiritual nature and retiring to poverty, meditation and seclusion.

Of course, the further we follow the Brahmanic conception down the long stream of time, the more we become conscious of its decay, and of the increasing multitude of beggars little hallowed by sanctity of life. It was inevitable that as populations increased, their idler and lazier constituents should make the life of sacred poverty a means of mere brazen beggary. Such abuses are incident to all creeds inculcating what we call charity. In every Christian country how many are there who maintain themselves by unabashed and mendacious mendicancy without any return whatever except cynical ingratitude. Every great age fallen into

decay shows like symptoms. Thus, in Greece, when seers, thinkers, lawgivers, and patriots were a splendid memory, the heritage of their deeds and wisdom dwindled to a residuum of cant phrases, and in every household might be seen a professor of wisdom and poetry, maintained as a kind of family adviser, although little meriting his maintenance. What had been the free gift of the world's greatest thinkers degenerated to a compendium of sophistries cleverly handled by beggars.

Influences from the East abounded in imperial Rome, and this principle of the separation of the spiritual from the physical life was well known. And as Christianity made its way amongst slaves and paupers, the association of poverty with faith in the Man of poverty and of sorrow was inevitable. Such wealthy Romans as joined the humble worshippers of our Lord made valid their confession by sharing their goods amongst their fellow-Christians, by voluntary abnegation of wealth, by tending the sick and the dying, by care for the decorous burial of the dead. The exquisite stories of saints and martyrs, who lived and laboured during the centuries of persecution, bear full testimony that the Christian life was lived in Christ's way by His genuine followers. For Christ Himself not only preached a gospel infinitely more consoling to the poor than to the rich, but He indicated on more than one occasion that it was a gospel difficult of acceptance by the rich. And His own methods were those of the East. Followed by a

group of men, either labourers, or having sacrificed lucrative posts for His sake, He passed from village to village, healing, consoling, teaching, living on the hospitality of the villagers, not refusing that of the wealthy, but alert to point out the immeasurably greater value of the gifts of the poor.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of mutual help constantly given in the commerce of daily life. It is not the gospel of individual accumulation of material wealth, against which He hurled His most scathing invective,—"Thou fool!" And for this reason, that He knew what wealth does for the spirits of men, devitalising, impoverishing, perhaps quenching for ever.

It was not wonderful, therefore, that in the decadence of Rome, when her life was corrupt to the core, Christian men and women fled into the wilderness to practise the poverty and holiness impossible in the cities, and that hermits became the forerunners of the monastic orders.

Nor was it wonderful that the sanctity, learning and curative skill of the early hermits obtained for them a prestige which heralded degeneration. Because, when the idle and the vicious found that, by simulating sanctity and seeking solitude, they received veneration and support from the country people around their caves and huts, they hastened to assume a virtue which they did not practise, and in time brought contempt and suspicion upon the whole system. From its inadequacy sprang the earliest of the monastic orders.

Perhaps St. Jerome may be accounted as the first of the monks of the West, although he began as a hermit in Egypt. But, in response to the petition of certain patrician Romans, he founded a primitive monastery at Bethlehem, where both men and women practised the life of self-denial and devotion under his direction. In later centuries the small order of the Jeronomites perpetuated his Rule, which admitted of industry, manufacture and gradual wealth. But St. Jerome is not so intimately associated as is Benedict with the institution of what became one of the most powerful and enduring systems of the Catholic Church.

Benedict, who was born at Norcia in Umbria, belonged to the end of the fifth and first half of the sixth centuries. It was an age when the hermit life seemed to be the only refuge from depravity and violence, and in his school-boy years at Rome he revolted from the corruption around him. Wealth, rank and power seemed to be only agents of vice, cruelty and effeminacy, and his pure young spirit turned from all to seek in poverty and solitude that communion with the immortal and invisible, which was not denied to him. But as the fame of his holiness and its supernatural efficacy went abroad, numbers of refugees collected about him, and he was forced to organise them into communities of twelve, each under a superior, in simple accord with the example of Christ and His disciples. And on the summit of Monte Cassino he founded his chief monastery, whose Rule comprised

not only the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience already known to the hermits, but daily manual labour for seven hours and a novitiate lasting a whole year before the final vows might be taken. The metropolis of monasticism was founded in poverty and for poverty—poverty and hard work being clearly recognised as tutelary against corporeal and mental backsliding.

Already, however, a missionary colony in an island of the northern seas, which had not heard of Benedict, was practising a missionary Rule on the lines laid down by Christ Himself, and from Iona brothers went two by two throughout Scotland and Northern England, crossing the dangerous seas in fragile coracles, living with the wild and lonely Caledonians, Scots, Picts and Angles, carrying neither purse nor scrip, but bearing in their hearts the love of men; in their memories and on their lips the story of salvation; in their hands power to heal, to help, to work with the toiling poor amongst whom they sojourned.

The Benedictines slowly degenerated from the practice of their founder's Rule, and by the end of the ninth century had almost forgotten his injunctions. Laziness and idleness triumphed as usual, where Christ was no longer the example. And worse than these, although inevitable to these, crimes of the blackest character—so that the better monks, who sought to restore the primitive Rule, ran constant risk of murder, and left the monasteries for the hermitage again. A great resuscitation of the

hermit system belongs to the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries.

The last of these was an age of monastic reform, and many offshoots from Benedictinism began in the full inspiration of poverty and sanctity, to forget and betray both when their reputation brought offerings and bequests of land and wealth.

Gregory the Great sent Benedictine missionaries to England, who came into collision with the Christian Church amongst the Britons of various Celtic stocks. These were gifted with a somewhat critical spirituality, and preferred the life and teaching of our Lord to ecclesiastical authority; they were obtuse therefore to the advantages of a superimposed code and hierarchy. This element in the mixed population prevented the absolute domination of Rome in Great Britain, maintaining a wholesome resistance which shaped the national life, although it contained the germs of future schisms and disruptions. But these were almost invariably a protest against the worldliness of the Church and an effort to restore the simple worship of apostolic times.

The other great monastic order took its name, although scarcely its origin, from St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. Its communities appeared in the ninth century, when Pope Leo and the Emperor Lothaire collected all the clergy who were outside of the Benedictine Rule and placed them under a Rule said to have been promulgated by St. Augustine. Four centuries later the hermits and other

free lances of the life of poverty and contemplation had become less a help than a hindrance to the Church, as they evaded discipline, and were mere bold beggars, whose practice was less devotion than squalor. These the Popes forced into the Augustinian Order, and Alexander IV. added the scourge to their penitential exercises.

From this order sprang many branches, amongst them the Knights Templars and the Knights of St. John, for it appealed more to the noble classes than did the Benedictines, beloved of the poor. It is, therefore, somewhat astonishing to discover that when the Mendicant Orders arose they adopted the Rule of Augustine rather than of Benedict.

Of the sources of decay in these communities much has been written. It may be taken as indubitable that the chief agent in their failure was the Papacy, its example, its struggle to become a world power, its success, and its consequent removal of the Church from the sphere within whose limits the Divine Founder had placed its functions and aspirations. But the almost incredible perversity of the Popes in steadily disregarding Christ's injunctions belongs to the history of their conflict with the Empire, and in this chapter we can only glance at its disastrous operation upon every organ and function of the visible Church.

It is difficult to make a whole generation see what the one witness to God can see during its existence, but had the Head of the Church on earth been that witness, how different now would be its

relation to God and its influence upon men. A line of Popes spiritually descended from Gregory the First might have saved the Church from its materialism, its polytheism, its despotism, its wars, cruelties and crimes, might have kept its light clear, fed by the Divine oil of humility, charity and unworldliness, not quenched by assumptions and dogmas founded on impious forgery and unholy ambition.

"My Kingdom is not of this world," proclaimed Christ, and it was this kingdom which the Popes declined to establish, preferring to yield to just those temptations which our Lord in the wilderness repelled and overcame.

Almost every so-called heresy from the ninth century onwards was a courageous protest against the materialism, arrogance, ambition and luxurious living of the whole hierarchical body and a demand for the Church's return to the simple organisation of apostolic times.

The Cathari, or Albigenses, the Poor Men of Lyons, the Arnoldists, the followers of Pons of Perigord, laid long and apparently futile siege to the false foundations of the mighty ecclesiastical fortress, and if, for the most part, they were ruthlessly crushed, still their mines and galleries facilitated the explosion when it came in the form of the Protestant disruption. That some of these courageous men were affected by the Oriental doctrine of the suppression of all human duties, relationships and necessities, in order to attain a

spiritual exaltation which placed them *en rapport* with the other world, seems to be certain, and these extremists were, of course, dangerous to the daily life and conduct consecrated by Christ. But others, as Peter Waldo, Arnold of Brescia and his stern persecutor, Bernard of Clairvaux, attacked the shameful lives of the clergy, their greed, luxury and immorality, and demanded a return to the poverty enjoined by Christ on all whom He consecrated to preach the gospel. How furiously the Church assailed its critics is matter of history. Where they were poor and unprotected they were slain by the sword, as in the case of the Albigenses, rooted out by command of Innocent III., who dared to call himself the Vicar of Christ!

It is no wonder, therefore, that the monastic orders grew wealthy, luxurious, haughty. We may be thankful that some of them grew learned also, that before the invention of printing they collected manuscripts and copied them, and that they preserved the Bible by means of constant transcriptions. To learned monks we owe most of the history of Europe, the preservation of the classics, of books of doctrine, patristic and theological; the beginnings of education, the early arts, the rudimentary sciences or pseudo-sciences. And, especially in England, the convents were the only centres of charity to the poor, of healing and nursing, of consolation and of escape from the turbulence and cruelties of pre-reformation times.

But their spiritual influence was at a minimum,

and they encouraged rather than over-bridged the gulf between the secular and the monastic life, making a bequest to their order the price for death-bed repentance and absolution, although the life of the testator had been a prolonged defiance of every one of God's commandments.

What worth for the world they retained was due to the spirit in which they had been founded, and to the rule prescribed, although too often relaxed. What spiritual failure they suffered was due to the precepts, example and influence of the Roman Curia.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES

Early System—Growth of Hierarchical Body—Rome the Seat of Ecclesiastical Power—Change in the Character of Church — Its Feudal Possessions — Its Decadence in Ninth Century—Its Restoration by Henry III.—Gregory VII. — Investitures — Struggle between Papacy and Empire—Arnold of Brescia—The Peace of Venice.

THE simple congregational system of apostolic times passed away with the Apostles. As Christianity spread and new congregations were formed, it became necessary to call general meetings of their representatives at some convenient centre for each district. The president at such a meeting, chosen for his personal worth, became by common consent the spiritual overseer of his district, and these overseers formed the first episcopal body. The overseer in the city gradually grew in importance as his area of supervision became more densely populated, more complicated intellectually, morally and politically, than that of his colleague in the country. The ecclesiastical hierarchy hastened to its full equipment.

Why the Bishop of Rome should have overshadowed the bishops of other cities and other

countries it is not difficult to understand. Christianity began in Judea, and it might have been reasonably expected that the Bishop of Jerusalem should rise to be head of the Church government, but Judea was a province of the Roman Empire, and some centuries elapsed during which the Christian hierarchy was under the ban of the Empire and Palestine under its heel. That marvellous centralisation of power in the City of Rome not only long outlasted its virtual sway, but left behind it a prestige, a legend, to which the minds of men succumbed for fifteen centuries.

When the Emperor removed to Constantinople after sanctioning Christianity, that prestige became the heritage of the Church, which began to wield it in a manner altogether similar to the methods by which the Romans had consolidated their authority. The erewhile humble and saintly Bishops of Rome became potentates, and for the most part the change wrecked their humility and their saintliness. The hierarchical confederacy furthered their aims in all parts of the world to which Christianity had penetrated. Submission to the Church, faith in its dogmas, tribute to its treasury, took the place of the old-world attitude to the Empire. Its dogmas ceased to be the commands of Christ, or became perverted versions of His commands; traditions supplemented and almost replaced the Apostolic Scriptures; inventions and forgeries welded into tyranny the double authority assumed by the Bishops of Rome; men were taught an elaborate

paganism of angels and fiends, of miracles and judgment, to supply the gap of prescribed deities, nymphs, satyrs, and portents, instead of being led to recognise the working of the Holy Spirit, and of being strengthened in the life immortal and invisible proclaimed by St. Paul.

A policy of expediency in times of almost inconceivable difficulty extended and materialised the influence of the Church. It attempted to unite the legacy of Christ with the heritage of the Empire, and it succeeded in combining the domination of the latter with a terrifying assumption of supernatural authority, wherein there was little of Christ, but a great deal of the mysterious influence exercised upon superstitious and ignorant multitudes by every determined priesthood.

It had become, after some centuries of increasing power, the aim of the Roman Church no longer to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, His Fatherhood, His adoption of men willing to believe in His Son,—but to preach the Church's acceptance of all who acknowledged her authority and bowed to her dogmas. Yet, even in these days, men and women averted the calamitous declension by individual return to the precepts and example of Christ, and the proud and worldly organisation has ever been prompt to display those exceptional lives as the flower and fruit of her teaching.

Lands and wealth were bequeathed to the Church by nobles, princes and emperors, till the Bishop of Rome was suzerain in many parts of Italy, in Sicily

and Corsica, in Gaul, in the north of Africa and in Asia. It was becoming a world-power, made its own alliances—as with the Frankish Kingdom—defended its territories with the sword; disputed its own throne, two or three pretenders struggling at once for what was called the Chair of St. Peter; drew up its own codes of jurisdiction, based upon audacious forgeries, and shared in the disorders of the terrible years which brought the ninth century to a close.

During the succeeding century the power of the Papacy shrank to its minimum, and could scarcely claim from its vassals recognition of its feudal supremacy, losing Sicily and Southern Italy to Saracens and Normans. A like anarchy prevailed in the Empire of the West, but it revived with Otho of Saxony, son of Henry the Fowler, who made himself feared as King of Germany and Emperor of the Romans, head of both State and Church within his dominions. This great Emperor came to Rome to put his supremacy in force, and found the Church suffering from a Pope so profligate, reckless and irresponsible, that we recognise in him the authentic heir of that insanity which befel many of the Roman Emperors, when in their own person they assumed the position and received the homage due both to the Deity and to the sovereign. On representations made to him by the Synod, which he convened at St. Peter's, Otho deposed Pope John XII. and raised Leo VIII. to the Papacy. But the Romans, ever capricious, changed their

minds and revolted against the Germans, and Otho was obliged to use force for their submission. In the end he established the imperial right to control papal elections, as well as to receive the homage of the Romans, and until the middle of the eleventh century his successors maintained their authority so far as it was possible over treacherous Pontiffs and turbulent citizens. One of them indeed, the brilliant Otho III., aimed at making Rome his capital, and but for his early and violent death might have succeeded in realising this great conception.

The Papacy continued to be a scorn and a derision in the hands of infamous or incompetent Popes, three of whom Henry III. deposed early in the eleventh century, nominating one German bishop after another to the pontifical chair, and superintending the reform which these commenced in the lives of the degenerate clergy. With that reform, however, began unconsciously the gradual growth of the arrogance inseparable from actual power, which led to the restoration of the temporal power, to the vast and imperial pretensions of a line of determined Popes, to the bloody struggle with the very Empire which had re-established, protected, and in some respects reformed the Papacy, a struggle lasting two centuries, and although almost successful for the latter, still the essential cause of its downfall.

The Church, at Henry III.'s death, was still bound to the Empire, not only by ties of gratitude,

but by an understood subjection to its head. But as the latter depended on the co-operation of Rome for the coronation which legalised his title of Emperor, the Popes, once more restored to the respect of Christianity, realised how powerful was this prerogative for the furtherance of their ambitions. Nicholas II. summoned a Council in 1059, which excluded the Emperor as elector to the Papacy, as well as both nobles and burgesses of Rome, and which revolutionised the existing constitution. His successor, Gregory VII., who had counselled this step, was thus furnished with the preliminary means towards his audacious aim of freeing the Papacy from secular intervention. No longer were Empire and Church to work together as body and soul for the civilisation and Christianisation of the world, but the Church was to sway the destinies of its kingdoms, unhindered by the voice of their sovereigns, or the vote of their Councils.

Fortunately, strong sovereigns were on some of the thrones thus menaced, such as Norman William, who laughed the attempt to convert England into a Papal fief to scorn.

The Romans, too, were a perpetual thorn in the Pontiff's side, and nothing testifies so irrefragably to the spiritual futility of the Roman Church as its powerlessness to deal with its immediate difficulties. Whatever impression of holiness it might maintain beyond Rome's ring of city-studded mountains, within that circle familiarity with its methods, its

hypocrisies, its cruelties and its greed had bred immortal contempt. Gregory VII. refounded the Church, not upon the Rock Christ Jesus, but upon the absolute power of the Papacy. He asserted the supremacy of the Popes, not alone in ecclesiastical, but in political matters, and as to spiritual matters, he and his successors were greater adepts at wielding a spiritual terrorism than at making Christian precept influential. The man's love of power was unbounded; it had the harsh Teutonic quality, which eventuates in tyranny, and it was this overweening and unspiritual humanity which he forced into the mediæval conception of the Papacy.

Great as was his apparent success, it was flawed and rent with the strain to which he subjected the system, and from his time the Western world rocked and reeled above the tremors of doubt and repulsion, which heralded the inevitable outbreak in the countries of slow-broadening freedom. That it was an outbreak of volcanic force and not a reformation from within was due to Gregory VII. and his successors, whose assumption of infallibility for the Church destroyed its need and its faculty for critical introspection, and armed it with a ready sword, with tortures and with death against the very men who might have recalled it to its first and forgotten purity. The Popes, who clung to their lands and their wealth, who equipped armies and cursed nations, made the outbreak a terrible necessity.

Gregory VII. dared to use the anathema for

purely worldly purposes, and conquered by virtue of the blight which interdict and excommunication effected. And if the papal weapons could terrorise the very Emperor, how natural it was that the feudal vassals of the Empire, who resented control, should seek alliance with the power which wielded them. The very existence of the Popes, secularised into aggressive politicians, while retaining in the imaginations of men this blasting potentiality, was a menace to the States of Europe. It was more than a menace to Henry IV., against whom Gregory employed every artifice of priestcraft, every treason that man can practise against man, every sacrilegious use of the terrors whose exercise he dared to arrogate.

But he planted two strong seeds and watered them with blood—detestation of the Papacy in Germany and the war between Papacy and Empire.

The struggle began on the question of investiture. It was the prerogative of Henry IV.'s predecessors to appoint the prelates and dignitaries who ruled the German Church, and if he abused this prerogative and sold these high places to unworthy clerics, he did what Popes had done before him and what his training under corrupt Pope-chosen ecclesiastics had taught him to do. Recovering from the penance imposed upon him, he appointed an anti-pope and began to lay siege to the papal fiefs, so that Gregory was forced to call the terrible sword of Robert Guiscard to his aid, and himself died in exile.

His successors carried on the strife and perpetuated the use of intrigue and treachery so associated with the practice of the Roman Curia, while the Emperors learned to emulate their craft and could devastate Italy with larger armies.

Sixteen Popes, with but few exceptions, were in arms against the Emperors during the course of the twelfth century, and five anti-popes testify to the occasional success of the latter. They were fighting for their very existence as Emperors, the Popes for their very existence as territorial Lords. It was the tremendous question between temporal suzerainty and a spiritual suzerainty bent as well on temporal supremacy.

Many of the papal temporalities were based upon a forgery known as the "Donation of Constantine," a document literally conceived in iniquity and expressed in blasphemy, while its claim to be the tribunal at which kings and emperors must be judged was based on the "Decretal Epistles," a clever collection of forgeries, here and there provided with a genuine pastoral letter. Without these two foundation stones, the temporal power, which has betrayed the spiritual, could not have been erected. Neither one nor the other suggests the Rock Christ Jesus.

The very schemes, which the Popes evolved for the occupation of Christendom and the restoration of their Asiatic fiefs, were educating men into larger views, into more logical conception of the Divine intention for both Church and nations.

This spectacle of an armed and death-dealing Papacy intent on territorial possession, concerned not at all for the souls and bodies of men, undermined the imposing structure. Every secession marked an acute perception of the monstrous anomaly displayed by the Papacy. Even its most zealous supporters brought home charges of luxury, ostentation, vice and idleness against its clergy, and Bernard of Clairvaux, who persecuted its opponents and conciliated its schisms, spoke bravely against its pride, avarice, secularisation and corruption. The strife was at its culminating point during the reign of Frederick Barbarossa, and when Hadrian IV. and Alexander III. were Popes, that is, from the middle of the twelfth century till about 1180.

Eugenius III. succeeded Lucius II. in 1145, and inherited his strife with the Romans, who, under Arnold of Brescia, had almost succeeded in securing their civic independence of both Pope and Emperor. Lucius, indeed, died a soldier's death at the head of his mercenaries, storming the Capitol, where the Romans had established their government. Arnold was perhaps more formidable to the Papacy than both the dynasties of Saxon and Hohenstaufen emperors. A Brescian by birth, a student at Paris, where he acquired the art of rhetoric, the practice of logical reasoning, dialectics and liberal theology under Abelard, blameless in life and attractive in person, with flawless courage both physical and moral, he discerned the root of every monstrous evil which had sprung from papal

misguidance. Brescia was already accustomed to plain speaking and to discontent with the luxury and arrogance of its own prelate and priests, whom, as Gregorovius has said, "words failed to describe, but whom neither councils nor monastic orders could cure".

Arnold plunged into the fray, declaring with acute diagnosis that neither property nor power could righteously belong to the clergy, but that holy living would entitle them to receive tithes from those whom they spiritually benefited. In support of this doctrine was the adolescent mind of Northern Italy and of Germany, for the crusaders had effected much in liberating, informing and maturing the intelligence of the West.

His war-cry was, "Let the temporal power of the prelates come to an end"—and it was echoed wherever light had dawned on the minds of men, and wherever was felt the tyrannous pressure of the sovereign curia. Above all, at its very gates, in Rome itself, the citizens and nobles maintained a constant contention with the *Dominium Temporale*, and when Arnold appeared amongst them they welcomed his cause as one with which they had been long familiar, and secured his assistance in establishing the civic independence on which they were bent. For it was the birth-time of the burgher rights, and industries, arts and crafts were sending into the broad field of the world powers that made for liberty, scarcely aware of whose banner they had hoisted.

One Pope had already in half-hearted fashion acknowledged the anomaly of the feudal position of prelates and priests, but his attempt to reform it did not seek to purge the Papacy from the evil which he condemned, and it broke down. But that the canker had, in some of its symptoms, been admitted by Paschal II., might have been pushed home had Bernard of Clairvaux and Arnold been able to combine on a common ground of action. Unfortunately, Arnold was too much alienated by the hopeless corruption of the Church to admit that even ecclesiastically its hierarchy was fitted for government, and Bernard was as much convinced of its spiritual potentiality as he was concerned about its moral degeneracy. He was Arnold's unrelenting foe, and had pursued him with stern denunciation wherever he had taken refuge.

In the new outbreak of Rome against the Pope, Arnold was protected by the citizens, and when Lucius died, Eugenius III. practised a crafty statesmanship, which, while flattering the Romans, slowly undermined their resistance and depreciated their enthusiasm for its leader. And Hadrian inherited what his predecessor's craft effected, when his opportunity arrived.

A cardinal was murdered in a Roman brawl, and Pope Hadrian laid the city under interdict until Arnold was banished. Alas! he too was the victim of the men whom he tried to help, and they betrayed him because Eugenius had bought their

good-will with alms and Hadrian had paralysed their cowardly souls. But, while he lived, that one pure spirit, whom money could not purchase nor papal thunders terrify, Popes sat uneasy on their throne, and Hadrian made him the price of Barbarossa's coronation. Rather the man of fire and sword, who could be fought by hirelings, kept at bay by diplomacy, managed by invocation of all the infernal terrors, than the voice speaking in the wilderness, which called men to repentance, and whose owner practised the simplicity, the austerity, the pitifulness of Christ.

Into a new era Empire and Papacy carried the old war. But there was scarcely any rag of spiritual pretension left with which to veil its violence. The *casus belli* was the fair domain in Northern Italy claimed alike by Pope and Emperor. Other motives, indeed, mingled with this, and while Frederick appealed to authority ancient as the Roman power and deriving from the Ruler of Heaven and earth, Hadrian curbed his vaulting ambition with the reminder that, unconsecrated by the Pope, his imperial state was a figment of the imagination. The only English Pope held his dominion very briefly, but his successor, Alexander III., although harassed by Frederick's anti-popes and threatened by his determined effort to recover the control wielded by Otho and Henry III., maintained an unyielding resistance, and secured both the papal chair and the ultimate victory over Frederick. This great event was signalised by the Peace of

Venice, on 1st August, 1177. It was precipitated by the defeat suffered by Frederick from the Lombard cities, whose League the Pope approved and blessed, helping civic liberty when it was useful against his foe. There were more signatories to the Peace than the two principals, for the great republics sent their envoys, and both Sicily and Constantinople furnished their rulers to the congress assembled by Sebastian Ziani, the Doge of Venice.

And Alexander III. emerged triumphant from his perplexities, the independent ruler of Rome, the feudal lord of his *Patrimonium*, pardoning with dramatic impressiveness his mighty foe, whom awe of the invisible had shaken into penitence.

Then stubborn Rome yielded to the infection and begged the Pope's return to the Lateran, where he took prompt measures to ensure the papal elections once for all against secular intervention and against the scandal of anti-popes from which he had just been delivered. He called an Œcumenical Council and issued its decree, that two-thirds of the votes of the College of Cardinals should henceforth elect a Pope, and that neither Emperor, nor prince nor burgess might vote at all.

Two years more of trouble and exile he endured, and then in 1181 Alexander III. died at Civita Castellana, bequeathing that strange combination of power abroad and impotence at home to his successor.

CHAPTER III

CLIMAX OF THE PAPAL POWER

Three Popes in Exile—Clement III. and the Romans—The Great Crusade—Henry VI.—Celestine III.—Tusculum—Innocent III.—The Emperor Otho—Francis at the Lateran—Assisi in the Remote Past—Under Rome—Its First Christian Martyrs—Goths, Huns, Lombards and Germans in Assisi—Its Troubled Civic History.

TWO Popes in exile wore the tiara, but could not sit in St. Peter's Chair, kept at bay by the Romans, whom they cursed in vain. It was into Christendom, so vexed for lack of Christ, that Francis was born, shortly after Pope Alexander's death, and while Lucius III. was branding his Romans as heretics from the safe distance of Verona, where, on his death, Urban III. kept such state as was possible outside the Lateran and St. Peter's. He prosecuted the feud with Barbarossa's son, who would not slacken hold on Matilda's lands, and refused to crown him. So, in right of his wife, Henry assumed the suzerainty as well as the possession of Sicily, got himself crowned by the Patriarch of Aquileia, and commenced to harass the Papal States. Urban died after two years of disaster, and his successor, Gregory VIII., anxious

for peace and for a new crusade to recover Jerusalem, had scarcely time to make his wishes known when he too died, and a man of Roman birth and sterner character was raised to the Papacy as Clement III. He entered into negotiations with Rome as with a separate Power, and for certain payments and permission to destroy the City of Tusculum, so often the refuge of Popes from the Romans, he was allowed to return to the Lateran, but with his secular power reduced to a minimum. However, that was a matter which time might remedy, and for the present there was Jerusalem to be recaptured and the sovereigns of Europe to be managed to that end, an easier matter than keeping his citizens in order. So Barbarossa, Philip of France and Richard of England, with a host of minor princes and dukes, made alliance, and sailed for the East, the first to his death by misadventure, the last to failure and captivity on his homeward way. No one of them visited the Pope on the outward journey, although they were as close to Rome as Ostia and Messina. On Barbarossa's death, Clement was prepared to crown Henry emperor, but he died before the Easter of 1191, which he had fixed for the ceremony. A fortnight later, his successor, Celestine III., was ordained, and crowned Henry VI. the following day ; but the Romans had exacted as price of the hallowing the complete destruction of Tusculum by the German soldiers, and together they made of the ancient and powerful city a melancholy desert, a few heaps of scattered

and unrecognisable stones. Such requital its lords received for long years of loyalty to the Curia. This atrocity was completed two days after the Emperor's coronation, three after the Pope's ordination. Celestine let the Romans do much as they liked, so long as he might hold the Lateran and the Leonine City, but their incessant feuds and the habitual indolence of a pleasure-loving populace, ready for revolts and ready for the pageantries of peace, without determination and without union, made it impossible for Rome to attain the dignity founded on industry, energy and civic responsibility which obtained in Lombardy and Tuscany. Its Senate was already in the hands of the nobles, and a succession of revolutions fills the Roman chronicles of this time.

Henry VI. had suppressed Sicily and secured Spoleto, Romagna and the Marches before his sudden and early death in September, 1197, and Celestine had no time to seize the opportunity which this event afforded, for a few months later he, too, ended his vexed and hampered life in the beginning of 1198.

The eighteen years of his successor's sway form the most remarkable period of papal pretension, audacity and political influence. Innocent III., a man who, as far as mere vice was concerned, was blameless, but in whom it is impossible to deny the vigorous existence of every spiritual sin which can lead the soul astray from the Divine intention, made himself literally arbiter of the kings and

governments of Western Europe. His first care was to purchase terms with the Romans ; his next, to regain the papal suzerainty over Campania, the Maritima, the Sabina and Tuscany. The disturbed state of the Empire gave him his next opportunity, and he played the impressive part of liberator from the hated German yoke, attracting the cities to his banner and forcing the German princes to surrender and even to leave Italy. Scarcely six months a Pope, he was able to make a royal progress and to receive the homage of many a city long accustomed to give grudging service to imperial governors. For the first time Perugia, on the Umbrian hills, bent to a sovereign Pontiff, and received from his hands the communal franchise already granted by Henry VI. Assisi he claimed and won from Count Conrad, its people gladly consenting, and tearing down their castle walls that they might never again harbour a foreign master. Francis was sixteen years old then, a fascinating lad, gay in his father's cloths and silks from the markets of Southern France, ruffling it with the younger nobles of Assisi, taking part, we may be sure, in all the gala doings of that day of liberation, doubtless receiving into his sub-consciousness that object-lesson of Innocent, Vicar of Christ, with hand to sword, chasing away his foes with a mere arm of flesh, anomalously reinforced, somehow, by an incalculable mysterious power to send their souls to hell. Florence, Lucca and Siena were matured in civic liberty, and would not grant him political ascendency, so that, in spite

of his masterly treatment of the rôle elected, he played it to their suspicious burghers with too much intention to secure their confidence. In Tuscany, therefore, he was a name rather than a power, and its cities kept that portion of Matilda's heritage which they had wrested from Barbarossa. From the Marches to Latium he placed his provinces in the care of his own officers, protected by powerful fortresses securely garrisoned. The strife for the imperial throne between the houses of Hohenstaufen and Saxony gave him a further chance, promptly converted into an unscrupulous but brilliant diplomatic advantage; and while either side sought his suffrage, he played one against the other, noting and rising upon the weaknesses of both. All the time he held in the background the little Frederick, Barbarossa's grandson, neglected by the rivals and apparently of no account to Innocent, but at the right moment to be produced for the discomfiture of the unmanageable pretenders and for the furtherance of his own purposes. For he had carefully seen to the boy's corruption, and had discounted his inheritance of mind and craft from the Hohenstaufen line. That Frederick lived to be a thorn in the side of the Papacy was not merely one of time's revenges, but a proof that even the most daring, far-seeing and provident of intriguers cannot always cope with the future he has himself contrived.

It was ever as the friend of freedom that Innocent posed, taking advantage of the discord between thrones and nations at the time, as he had taken

advantage of the strife between the Italian cities and the Empire. How great a freedom he would have granted had all power been his may be computed from his menaces, his persecutions, his interventions, his interdicts and his excommunications. He ripened the Papacy for the Inquisition, for the systems of espionage and betrayal which have made it odious and which have been the startling and conclusive evidence of its spiritual decay.

But the Romans gave him scant domestic rest, although he tried to buy it at the cost of Viterbo, helping them with troops and money to subdue that unhappy city with which they were at war. He had his own reasons for this alliance. Italy swarmed with heretics who exalted renunciation and poverty, and taught a recalcitrant attitude towards the wealthy land-owning hierarchy. Not alone were the Waldensians giving trouble, but Patarins and Cathari were sedulously spreading their antagonism to doctrines essential to the Church's supremacy. They revived the Oriental creeds of poverty and mysticism combined, of the conflict of principles good and evil, of the spiritual in opposition to the carnal; they encouraged renunciation, even of life itself in certain cases, of marriage, industry and commerce. Milan and Viterbo were their headquarters in Italy, and thence they sent their missionaries, winning to their numbers some of the finest minds of the Peninsula, and some of its nobles estranged by the materialism of the court and clergy of Rome. In-

nocent himself dictated the peace which made Viterbo vassal to the Roman Commune.

He paid himself for this singular alliance by seizing the lands of Count Odo of Poli, who had offered them to the Romans for sale, and by conferring them on his brother. This rapacious act roused the ready suspicion of the citizens, amongst whom the old hatred broke out in tumult and fighting. Innocent had to fly to Palestrina, where, lord of the civilised world, he was tossed to and fro like a puppet in the hands of conflicting parties at home, shifting from one side to the other, nobles, senators, people, alive only to their own interest, while the Pope had to bide his opportunity. Five years were occupied in this domestic quarrel, and Rome was in a state so deplorable that at last the people cried aloud for peace, and Innocent, knowing acutely the civic temperament, found the moment opportune for copious bribery, and although the resolute citizen Capocci protested against surrender, papal tactics and the papal soldiery made brief work of the enfeebled resistance. Innocent triumphed and returned, his umpires yielding to him the right of electing the Roman Senate. The city was worn out, and until he died this constitution was maintained. Papal greed had roused the strife and papal greed revived with its close, but this time Innocent seized the territories of the child king of Sicily, who could not defend them, nor even dispute his usurpation. He gave his brother Richard the title of Count of Sora, and

bestowed upon him not only the lands of the Counts of Poli, but Sora, Arpino, Arce and Isola, to be held as fiefs of the Church. It was after this act of dishonourable spoliation that he crowned Otho of Saxony emperor, who forthwith fell to making treaties against him, intent upon reconquering the imperial fiefs. But Innocent promptly excommunicated him, a fact which was of waning significance in Italy and of none at all in Rome, but which retained its baleful power in Germany, and Otho returned thither after two years of further conflict during which the Umbrian cities were faithful to Innocent.

It was in the summer of 1210, three months before he launched this excommunication, while he was receiving news of Otho's successes in Southern Italy, where even Naples surrendered to the Emperor, and while his haughty and rapacious spirit was infuriated at the losses inflicted upon the Papacy by its minion, whose discomfiture he meditated by that thunderbolt—that Francis was brought face to face with Innocent.

It was one of the most impressive interviews which history records, and reminds us of our Lord before King Herod. But Herod was a trifler compared to the able Pontiff and our Lord was no suppliant at his paltry court. We can picture that crowned nonentity growing restless and ill at ease in presence of so majestic a silence.

Nor was the stupendous contrast between Innocent and Francis conceivable in their time. It is

only now, almost seven centuries since it happened, that we see it in the full depth of its shadow, the full radiance of its light. On the papal throne, the world incarnate; at its foot, the one man who believed that Christ's Rule of living was the only Rule possible for the health of humanity. For there was no Rule practically held by the Curia to be so foolish, so undesirable as Christ's Rule, and to the illumined soul of Francis there was none so wise and so to be desired.

This man came from Assisi, which had done homage to Pope Innocent twelve years earlier, had flung off the imperial suzerainty and discarded its Count-Governor. No older city sits upon the Umbrian hills. That it was important in the time of Augustus, and earlier, is proved by its beautiful portico of the ancient Temple of Minerva now leading to a Christian church; by its extensive forum buried under the modern piazza; by its amphitheatre and stadium, whose grass-grown seats still circle round what forms a kind of village green in the Piazza Nuova, houses interrupting their tiers; by Roman sculptures, reliefs and inscriptions, collected in its Pinacoteca, its public gardens, its municipal palace.

Some of these date from about three centuries B.C., when Assisi came under the power of Rome with the other cities of Umbria. But she had a history of her own before her subjection to the invincible republic.

If we may credit Pliny and Dionysius, it was in ages hardly calculable and prior to the siege of

Troy that the Ombri had been chased from Sicily by the Siculi, and had swarmed up the Italian peninsula and over the plains that lie west of the Adriatic. Thence the Etruscans drove them to seek safety within the Apennines, and they settled where that great plain, to which they gave their name, forms a table-land about 1,100 feet above the sea level, uplifted by mountain walls which enclose it on every side. Here they built towns upon the lower slopes, simple towns of little huts compacted of wood and clay or mud. They seem to have been an agricultural and pastoral people when they fled from their plains, but the mountain air hardened them into warriors and the exigencies of their lot completed the transformation. It was a time of restless movement, and the Etruscans followed them into Umbria and possessed themselves of one of these simple towns, building Perugia on its site and overlooking the wide plain with masterful and covetous eyes. Assisi was the nearest Umbrian city, and its neighbours made periodical attacks upon its inhabitants, which, at first, they evaded by withdrawing, with all their goods, into the bowels of Monte Subasio, upon an outlying slope of which their homes were built, and whose mass was pierced by caves and galleries. But in time they braced themselves up to conflict with the Etruscans, and became strong and gallant soldiers, aggressive as well as defensive, and the rivalry went on vigorously between them.

Then came the Romans at the end of the fourth

century before Christ, and Perugia allied herself to the cities of Umbria, in brave but unavailing resistance. Fabius, the consular general, conquered Umbria, and Rome established her garrisons in every city and commenced her educative processes. It is more than probable that Assisi had already acquired some of the arts of civilisation from her long though hostile intercourse with Perugia, and that prisoners there returned to their homes with knowledge of architecture and other civic advantages, which they proceeded to use. There exist massive remains of what might very well have been drains in the Etruscan manner, evidently older than the Roman occupation, and at Santa Maria delle Rose great Etruscan blocks still support an arch built and decorated in the time of Charlemagne.

But it is certain that Assisi was rebuilt in the years that followed its subjection, and that it became in time a singularly beautiful and richly decorated city. Its historian, Antonio Cristofani, helps us to reconstruct the old forum. Its chief ornament must have been the Temple of Minerva, whom a myth associates with the founding of the town by Dardanus, for Roman historians loved to support these pious frauds. Palladio considered the Corinthian columns which remain as the type of architectural perfection. Another temple, of Doric construction, was sacred to Apollo, and there are remains of more, of which three were dedicated to Jove, Hercules and Esculapius. Others rose in different parts of the romanised

city, and the temple of Janus has left its name in the Porta Mojano.

Remains of walls, columns, capitals, friezes and foundations attest the splendour of Assisi in imperial times, while numerous inscriptions supply dates and other details, and on these is based Cristofani's admirable account.

It was in Assisi, about the middle of the century before the Christian era, that the Latin poet, Propertius, was born, and, although educated at Rome and spending there the years of his literary and social success, he returned to "Umbria rich in fertile plains" so soon as his family property was restored to him, and spent the last lustrum of his brief life in simple domestic happiness· "where misty Mevania stands among the dews of the hill-girt plain, and the waters of the Umbrian lake grow warm the summer through".

Morning mists still crown Bevagna, and Bastia's old name of Isola Romanesca marks the site of Umbria's vanished lake. Many inscriptions attest the residence of the Propertius family in Assisi, most of them carefully stored under the portico of Minerva.

We find that during the decline of Rome its luxury penetrated into Assisi, where the nobles became conspicuous by their absence, preferring the pleasures of the capital to their duties at home, and where even the middle classes and the labourers fell into idle and effeminate ways. Agriculture was neglected; what industry there

was took the shape of the manufacture of luxuries, such as litters, of which so many were made that the workmen were united in a guild or college. In the second century the once flourishing town was impoverished by the combined influences of fashion and taxation, and it became necessary to maintain the children of its poorer inhabitants by public charity.

But even during this decadence the first breath of the new spirit was felt. We cannot accept the tradition that St. Peter, during his alleged episcopate, sent a special band of evangelists into Umbria, but it is certain that by the beginning of the third century evangelists were there, and that amongst the Assisans a small Christian community existed, leading the precarious lives of that age of persecution. The first bishop mentioned in local tradition was Rufino, one of these evangelists who had preached the gospel in Spoleto before he came to Assisi. Faithful to the Cross, when he was betrayed he confessed Christ in the presence of his judges, and was condemned to the flames, which died out, so that his half-scorched and suffering body was flung into the river Chiaggio on the other side of the plain. His followers drew it from the water, and gave it first burial near at hand, but when the reign of terror passed it was secretly transported up to the city, where now stands the old Duomo of San Rufino.

Nor do the first impressive annals end here. The second bishop, Vittorino, suffered martyrdom

about the middle of the same century, and the first years of the next witnessed the imprisonment, the cruel torture and the death by bastinado of Bishop Savino. But with him is connected an incident so beautiful that we must linger over it more fully to understand the legends of the Assisan Church, told to the little Francis by Madonna Pica, which sowed in his tender mind seed that blossomed into the most Christ-like life of Christendom, whose fruit is still for the healing of the nations.

Betrayed to the prefect Venustiano, Savino and two of his deacons confessed Christ and challenged the governor to produce an idol comparable to the Lord of Heaven and earth. The prefect sent for a little image of Jove set in coral, which Savino, getting leave to hold it in his hands, flung with all his strength upon the marble floor, so that it broke into pieces. The furious governor bade a soldier cut off his hands, and dismissed him to prison for future torture, while the deacons, emboldened by such courage, refused to deny their Lord and were flung into the Chiaggio to die.

While Savino lingered in prison, a woman from Spoleto sought him out and asked him to heal her little nephew, who was blind. The saint called upon Christ and implored Him to show His saving health to the heathen, and then touching the child's eyes restored them to sight. The boy gave the glory to Christ, and eleven bystanders, including the gaoler, heathen hitherto, joined in

His praises, knelt down to confess His name, and received baptism from the bishop. Just at this time Venustiano suffered from acute spasms of pain in his eyes, from which no remedy gave him relief. Hearing of this cure he sent for the boy and learned all its details. Savino was brought from prison, and when the boy led him in, the prefect wept before him, asking his pardon and his help. The old man raised his eyes to heaven and prayed: "He will give thee light, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world, but thou must believe in Jesus Christ." Then the prefect ground the pieces of his once cherished idol into powder and flung it away. So Savino took water and sprinkled him with all the members of his family, baptising them in the new name, and with the water came light, and his eyes were whole again. In a transport of gratitude the prefect flung himself at Savino's feet, and asked him to entreat God's pardon for the cruelty he had shown, and most tenderly the bishop assured and comforted him. The news was quickly carried to Maximian at Rome, and he sent the tribune Lucius with orders to put Venustiano, his wife and his children to death, the Roman's death by decapitation. Their fellow-Christians in Assisi gave them burial. But Savino was beaten to death.

Assisi had her full share in the sufferings of the fifth and sixth centuries, when Italy was the battle-field of Goths, Huns, Franks, Alemannians and Lombards. Like some other cities of the peninsula,

she called in the assistance of the Byzantine Emperor and was ruled by his delegate, a Gothic soldier, who oddly enough took service in the Greek army. This man, called Siegfried, led the townspeople in a heroic resistance against Totila, and made sorties from the gates in gallant attack. In one of these he fell, and the citizen levy, disheartened, fled back, surrendering Assisi to the Huns, who tore down its walls, temples and public buildings.

But again we get a glimpse of a heroic bishop, no longer the head of a persecuted remnant, but the overseer of the local church, and the man who, when Siegfried fell, seems to have come forward to negotiate with Totila. Aventius was his name, and the conqueror respected him sufficiently to make him his legate to the Byzantine court, although we know neither his mission nor its success. Perhaps Totila asked for alliance and for recognition as lord of the Italian cities which he had conquered. If so, Justinian refused to listen to terms from the barbarian, and sent first unfortunate Belisarius and then Narses, who broke the power of the Huns and recovered Italy for the Eastern Empire.

But scarcely were the horrors of this time at an end, when Italy was again invaded from the north, and to the misery of war renewed were added floods, earthquakes and pestilence. The unhappy country was enfeebled by disease and starvation, its populations were reduced, and the only consolation left was the rapid death of its foes, menaced more by

plague than by the sword of Narses. This was the moment when the fierce Lombards fell upon its length and breadth as far as Rome, possessing themselves of Umbria as they passed. Assisi perhaps made terms with Spoleto, whose Lombard Duke Ariulfo rose to considerable power and even threatened Rome. But for centuries the annals of Assisi are almost dumb, and we hear nothing of her civic and political condition, so that her probable relation to the Duchy of Spoleto is conjecture.

The name of her bishop Aquilino appears amongst those summoned to Pope Martin I.'s Council in 659. Her Church seems to have become infected with the Arianism of her Lombard neighbours and Charlemagne desired to restore Umbria to Roman Christianity. He took Assisi by surprise in 773, first levelling its walls and then rebuilding them, and his chief care was to import a colony of Roman Christians. But the old citizens were almost annihilated because of their gallant resistance, and the civil wars that followed renewed miseries from which they had been recovering.

Either during this restoration of Assisi, or immediately after, the castle, or Rocca d'Assisi, was raised at the top of the hill, which forms a buttress to the broad-based Subasio, and up which the town climbs towards its now ruined fortress. Built for protection, the castle with its towers and keep and ramparts, its walls descending on either flank of the city to encircle it with fortifications, proved to be a lure inviting attack, and during the fierce

hostility between Popes and Emperors poor Assisi was the objective of many a German adventurer, who knew better than her citizens how to occupy and defend the beautiful fortress which the latter had built. Charles the Great had presented the cities of Umbria and the Exarchate of Ravenna to the Papal Curia, then glad enough of imperial patronage and gifts, so that Assisi counted as part of the Papal States, and for that sufficient reason was in constant danger from the Germans.

The city slipped back soon after the eighth century into tributary alliance with Spoleto, and for the greater part of the two succeeding centuries claimed judgment from the Duke of Spoleto in the numerous disputes between her ecclesiastics and the rural counts, who had possessed themselves of suburban lands, and were in constant litigation with both Church and town.

Documents belonging to the annals of the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries are very numerous, but relate more to the attendance of her bishops at Lateran Councils in Rome; to the exchange, sale and purchase of property; to the prominence, as castellan, of this and that Lombard and German count, or to the disputes between counts and abbots as to the ownership of certain lands, than to matters of more immediate interest. But some of them celebrate the building of churches and monasteries, and, amongst the latter, of the large and wealthy monastery of St. Benedict, which was raised upon the southern slope of Monte Subasio, at some dis-

tance east of the town, in 1041, and whose abbot, Aginaldo, founded the church and nunnery of St. Paul down in the plain thirty years later. Earlier in the century the church of St. Peter had been built, perhaps by one of the Lombard counts, and during its whole course religious settlements were established within and without the walls, the Benedictines predominating as founders. The bishops encouraged their spread. One of these, Bishop Hugo, whose episcopate lasted from 1036 to 1050, revived local interest in San Rufino and San Savino, building a church to the latter on the site of the ruined Temple of Janus, and raising the cathedral of San Rufino over the little oratory beneath which his bones had rested for eight centuries. He transferred the episcopal chair to this church and established a college of canons in a neighbouring cloister. This pious and venerable prelate was succeeded by one less worthy, Bishop Agino, who enriched himself by the tenure of abbacies and other benefices, following the scandalous example of contemporary ecclesiastics. We find him in far greater repute than his humble predecessors, appointed arbitrator in a court held by the Duchess of Perugia, wife of Geoffrey, Duke of Spoleto, at which was present her daughter Matilda, afterwards the great countess. The lust of power, which had taken possession of the court of Rome, had spread far and wide. The old rivalry with Perugia broke out before the death of Bishop Hugo, and Todi with Foligno took part on the

side of Assisi, a sign of advancing civic independence, but the long strife in Italy and the constant usurpation and tyranny of imperial adventurers delayed even while they stimulated the popular longing for its development.

Five bishops held the see during the twelfth century, men interested in the advancement of Assisi, for to their time belong both the hospital of San Rufino and the school opened in San Giorgio for educating the children of its townspeople.

It was the period of the Lombard League, which checked imperial ambition, although before the battle of Legnano, Barbarossa's chancellor, Archbishop Christian, invaded Umbria and possessed himself of both Spoleto and Assisi, an event which once more delayed the slow-maturing commune. Until he entered the city, much as Charlemagne had done three centuries earlier, by a drain, Assisi was only nominally subject to Barbarossa, and there are indications of an understanding between the commune and her nobles, an alliance for defensive purposes, celebrated in 1160 by a donation to the citizens of land and castles on the part of Count Offreduccio, and accepted by Bishop Ranieri in their name at an assembly of the nobles, clergy and townspeople held in the cathedral, on the sole condition that Assisi should help the donor in the perils of that time.

But Christian's siege and capture followed soon after, and was the Emperor's answer to so manifest an intention of home rule.

Apparently the great Hohenstaufen was himself in Assisi from the middle of December, 1177, till after the new year, his son Henry with him. The Emperor took all authority from the native nobles and invested Conrad of Lützen, whom he had already made Duke of besieged and despoiled Spoleto, with the government and title of Count of Assisi. He was less of a tyrant than most of the Emperor's deputies, had certain whims which secured him the nickname of "Conrad Fly in his Head," but he allowed the town to join the Umbrian League and, as we have seen, he submitted to Innocent III. in 1198. Pier Bernardone's house stood a few steps behind the upper corner of the piazza, and he must have witnessed the imperial state that Christmas-tide, four years before his son's birth, and have shared in the civic discontent with the new ruler.

PART II

BIOGRAPHICAL

CHAPTER I

FRANCIS, SON OF PIER BERNARDONE

1181—1204

Birth of Francis—His Parents—Peter Waldo—Childhood of Francis—At School—As a Youth—The Commune of Assisi—Francis as Citizen and Soldier—Prisoner in Perugia—His Release.

FRANCIS, son of Pier Bernardone, was born towards the end of the year 1181, just four years after Barbarossa's visit, and shortly after the death of Pope Alexander III., to whom the proud Hohenstaufen had knelt in St. Mark's.

September the twenty-sixth is celebrated in Assisi as the exact date of his birth, but it cannot be certified.

His father was a merchant in silks and cloths, making long journeys for sale and purchase.

Umbrian silk was a more important manufacture then than now, although the mulberry still flourishes for the double purpose of feeding the silkworm and

supporting the vine. But the quality of silken tissue made in the present day is inferior to that of other silk-weaving districts in Italy, perhaps because leaves of the elm are used as well as of the mulberry. Pier Bernardone, an Assisan himself, married a lady known to us as Pica, perhaps a foreigner and of gentle birth, but content to be the wealthy merchant's wife. Indeed, the merchants of that time were rising everywhere into importance, and M. Sabatier has reminded us of the conspicuous part which they played in the middle ages and later, travelling with their valuable wares in strong companies from market to market, from castle to castle, where not alone their silks and velvets made them welcome, but also their knowledge of what was going on in the countries traversed by their caravans. It was usual for them to receive shelter and hospitality where they halted; to carry oral messages and missives of political import; to be the special agents of princes and papal legates. The position of such men cannot be confounded with that of petty tradesmen, as their necessary conversance with other languages than their own, their use of courtly manners, and their value in those days when the exchange of despatches and the conveyance of money or jewels was beset with difficulties, must have given them both personal dignity and exceptional knowledge of the world.

Provençal was the language in all probability most familiar to Bernardone, and it is surmised

that Madonna Pica had been wooed and won in Southern France, in the gay accents of her native tongue. For Southern France was Bernardone's goal when he set out with bales and escort, and we can picture him at the fairs of its cities, where the world's commerce was transacted, and where, as at Venice and in the towns of Southern Germany, men of all nations met each other for barter and to exchange news from England on the West to Egypt on the East.

In Southern France, during the years before his son's birth, there was much talk of heresy. A money-lender called Peter Waldo, who had made a great fortune by his dubious trade, was stricken with contrition on hearing the story of St. Alexius from a traveller, probably a pilgrim. This was in the city of Lyons, and in the year 1171. The death of the saint, who had given up all that he might not be drawn into a worldly life, and who returned to his wife and parents as a dying mendicant, unrecognised by them till the last, made so profound an impression upon Waldo, that he consulted a master of theology as to what he should do to be saved. The divine spoke Christ's word to the man of many possessions: "Go, sell all that thou hast, give it to the poor and come follow Me."

Peter Waldo received the command with child-like faith and obedience. He settled his house and lands upon his wife, with money sufficient for her maintenance, and put aside funds to provide

for his little daughters as nuns in the order of Fontévraux. He then realised all that remained of his fortune and began to distribute it to the poor. A famine was desolating the country during that summer, and three times a week he gave bread, vegetables and meat to all who came to him. But on 15th August, not satisfied that he was fully carrying out Christ's injunction, he went amongst the poor on the streets, flinging money to them and calling aloud: "No man can serve two masters, God and Mammon."

The people crowded about him thinking him mad, but he declared that when they found him accumulating money they might call him mad, for only he was mad who trusted to wealth and forbore to trust in God.

Then, having given away all that he possessed, he went to a friend to beg bread, who gave it willingly and promised it for his life-time. Waldo's wife was deeply wounded that her husband should seek for maintenance from any one but herself, and went to the Archbishop, who recognised her right, and granted her permission to provide for his daily needs, but more than meagre fare and simplest clothing the penitent would not accept. His next step was to make himself acquainted with the Holy Scriptures and the Patristic writings. Two priests aided him in this, as he did not know Latin. He grew familiar with Christ's methods of proclaiming the gospel, and of organising, instructing and consecrating its missionaries. This

opened to him the next stage on the path of obedience. Men and women of the poorer classes crowded to him, confident that his holy poverty meant some definite hope for them, at a time when the poor were crushed under the arrogant heal of authority. Already he had a band of followers, willing to trust the spiritual rather than the material providence, and becoming confident that the latter was assured in sufficient measure.

Waldo and his disciples began to preach repentance and obedience to Christ's commands in the streets of Lyons. After a short time he sent them, two by two, to the outlying towns and villages, where they were welcomed into the houses and even into the churches. Lyons and its neighbourhood were soon ringing with the forgotten teaching of Jesus, which had lain in cerements of Latin for a thousand years. The people listened gladly, for beautiful in all ages are the feet of the messengers of peace.

In all things our Lord's instructions were followed. Two by two, the Waldensians went from place to place, from country to country. They wore sandals of wood, a simple tunic of woollen cloth, and carried neither purse nor scrip, trusting to the hospitality of those to whom they preached. They renounced possessions and settled homes, since the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. It was these preachers and teachers who were called Waldensians, not the people to whom they ministered. The latter might form congregations and accept

evangelical creed and practice, but, unless they desired to become missionary brethren, they were not called upon to give up their trades and homes, for Christ had consecrated home life, and only demanded poverty and renunciation from those whom He commissioned to teach and preach. This must be kept strictly in mind, because these so-called heretics were a protest against that wealth, material power and worldly authority which cankered Curia, hierarchy and monastic life. When men spoke of the Waldensians, they meant these poor preachers whom Waldo sent out from Lyons.

We have not space in which to narrate their extraordinary success throughout Southern France and Switzerland, Savoy and Lombardy. In two years the importance of their work was recognised in Rome, and some of them were summoned to the Lateran Council held by Alexander III. in 1179. Peter Waldo placed a translation into the vernacular of the Psalms and several other Scriptures before the Pope, and asked his permission to preach. Our bishop, Walter Map, was deputed with two others to examine Waldo and his colleagues, and foreseeing the effect of preaching a life of holy poverty upon the popular attitude towards his own wealthy and luxurious order, he sought to enmesh them in the subtleties of scholastic theology, and prevented Alexander from granting their request on the ground of their incompetence. So, although the Pope embraced Waldo, moved to tears by his humility, he made pretext after pretext for delay,

and died without giving the desired permission. For Waldo did not wish to leave the Church, nor to place himself in opposition to its authority. Like John Wesley, six centuries later in England, he longed to serve the Church through Christ's commission. But the hierarchy would have nought of Christ, and bishops and archbishops industriously followed Walter Map's initiative, until the Waldensians were in such ill odour at Rome that Lucius III. placed them under the papal ban in 1184, as one of the thirty-two heretical sects against which his Bull was promulgated.

Persecution was the incentive which, while exiling them from the Church, opened their eyes to the contrast between the authority wielded by the Curia and the authority given to the Apostles by our Lord. Never did Rome pursue a more impolitic course than when it emphasised this contrast by repudiating those who followed implicitly the instructions of Christ. A later Pope, led by one of his wisest cardinals, refrained from repeating Alexander's blunder when a similar crisis arose.

But the Waldensian influence spread and matured into an evangelical Church, which neither misprision nor persecution has availed to destroy, and now that more than seven centuries have passed, the Church of the Waldensians is the most active and honoured of those which are opposed to the ecclesiastical domination of the Curia.

These "Poor Men of Lyons" made a considerable stir during the final quarter of the twelfth

century, and Pier Bernardone must have met them as he travelled in Southern France and in Lombardy, faring two by two on their preaching tours. He would hear of all that befel them, and would know well that the "common people heard them gladly". On his return to Assisi, doubtless he would tell, amongst much else, the story of these gospel mendicants, perhaps laughing at their infatuation, perhaps with some not unkindly compassion for their sufferings. The movement was too conspicuous to be ignored by one who went and came through Lombardy and the valleys to Southern France. So while Francis was a child, a boy, a youth, he would hear from year to year of these men.

Of his childhood we know very little. Legends gathered round the story of his infancy, but they were almost inevitable in the time and to the people, when books did not exist, and accuracy had small chance beside loving imagination. But Francis needs no tender legends of angelic voices, angelic predictions, angelic sponsor at his baptism, which took place in the cathedral of San Rufino, probably a few days after his birth, and in the absence of his father, who was visiting the autumn fairs. The name given to him at the font was Giovanni, and perhaps the Baptist was his patron saint, the herald of Christ, who went out into the wilderness to call men to repentance.

But when Bernardone returned from France he picked up the babe with a gay greeting to his "little Frenchman," and Francesco became the

home name, the life name, the everlasting name. It was unique at the time, though kings and emperors were proud to bear it in generations that followed. This incident strengthens the surmise that Madonna Pica came from Provence.

Her first-born inherited his mother's nature, rather than that of his burly, business-like, domineering father, to whom his younger brother Angelus seems to have had a greater resemblance. From her he must have drawn both the delicate body and gracious nature which distinguished him. And from her he learned the earliest lessons of life, the manners and dainty fastidiousness by which he first expressed his instinctive making for perfection as it revealed its climbing steps. From her, too, he received in gentle hints, example and absorbing story that education of his intuitive reverence and devotion, which grew into steady saintliness. Hand in hand the mother and child would walk down the steep streets from Bernardone's house behind the municipal palace, and through the olive garths, to the tiny church of St. Mary of the Little Portion, most cherished of suburban shrines in those days. For it had a history nearly as old as the Assisan Church. Built early in the sixth century by St. Benedict during a pilgrimage over his native Umbria, for the settlement of brotherhoods belonging to his order, it was, even before his days, a place where prayer was wont to be made, for a little oratory existed there, shaped like a tomb, which perhaps it was, and legend ascribed the ruin

to palmers from the East, who had placed in it a relic from the Virgin Mary's sepulchre. Benedict found their ruined oratory, and caused the sanctuary to be built, and of his erection a wide door and the bases of its walls exist still in spite of scathe and pillage through fourteen centuries till now. For its walls were made of stout blocks of travertine, and local veneration prompted repair when earthquake or barbarian had unroofed them, so that the angels never ceased to abide there, or to guard their hallowed memories. For since it was a shrine built for the peasants and the poor, where the contrite might know the presence of God, it had no lure to distract from single-minded worship.

Hither Madonna Pica would lead her boy, and as they climbed home again, she doubtless told him the sweet stories of old, and pointed out to him the remote Chiaggio, in which so many of Assisi's sons had passed into life eternal for the sake of Christ.

Other instructions he had as he grew into boyhood, for a little down the hill from his father's house, towards the great plain, stood the beautiful Church of San Giorgio, now incorporated in Santa Chiara, where the clerical school for Assisan boys had been opened a century before his birth. Here he learned to read and write, and was taught Latin sufficiently well to enable him to use it in after years, if not with perfect facility, still in a style not far behind that of the ecclesiastics themselves. Another important accomplishment acquired at San Giorgio was the best Italian vernacular of the Middle Ages,

which he, long before Dante, was to use as an exquisite poetic medium. At home, if Madonna Pica was a native of Provence, the Provençal which came so naturally to Francis would be his mother-tongue, and Pica perhaps taught her boy its dainty canticles and chants d'amour, which were the chief literary expression of that day, echoing from country to country, in Southern Germany and even in England, and caught up with sympathetic rapture in Italy, where, even now, the plains and fields are filled with long, lingering cadences first heard a millennium ago.

As he grew older, he may have gone with Bernardone on his rounds, although we have no evidence on which to rest the conjecture, except his familiarity with the Troubadour contests of song, the Courts of Love, the rondels and chansonnettes in which royal and knightly rivals delighted to celebrate the beauty of some chosen damsel.

To a strain of gentle birth may be attributed his preference of the beautiful, the romantic, to the homely realities of life. As he passed from boyhood to youth, these tastes became so marked as to single him out, even amongst the young nobles of Assisi, for fastidiousness in food, dress and personal cleanliness. This last characteristic clung to him through life, in spite of the poverty which he wooed, and we find it in the exquisite stanza of his *Canticle of the Sun*, composed nearly at the end of his life, where he praises God for "our sister water, who is very useful, lowly, valuable and clean".

His intense solicitude for the cleanliness of churches, pyxes and awmbries, of all vessels connected with the Church celebrations, is another proof of its presence in him to the end. For there was too great a tendency to neglect and disorder in such matters then, and to Francis this was a constant source of regret. But in his youth the loftier uses of cleanliness were less pressing than the more immediate, and he spent much pains on his slim and graceful person, investing it in tunics and mantles of beautiful texture and colour, and loving the sheen and flash of jewelled clasp and brooch. The same daintiness characterised his use of food, and we learn that he shrank from meat and messes, and liked cakes and sweets and delicate dishes.

What he loved best of all in those days was the world of romance, and he was leader in the mimic tournaments of song and jest which occupied the young Assisan nobles. The sons of Lombard counts, perhaps of German, certainly of Assisan fief-holders, liegemen of the Empire, whose descendants still occupy the ancient palaces and gardens, had been his school-fellows. His gaiety, graciousness, genius, and the wealth which enabled him to go choicely clad, made him their favourite companion, a fact which reconciled the miserly Bernardone to his extravagance, although on one occasion he reprimanded him not unnaturally for some excessive expenditure.

He was essential to every banquet, every merry-

making, where his quick repartee, gift of song and joyousness radiated good-fellowship. And when he headed the fantastic processions and mummeries of the time, he would improvise new lays of love and go singing down the streets at the head of his band of friends—a brilliant spectacle, which brought the townsfolk to their windows and doors to look and listen. But nearly every biographer, from the thirteenth century till to-day, testifies to his freedom from all vicious excess, to the essential purity of his life. As he shrank from the coarser adjuncts of existence, so he shrank from vice. Mind, spirit and body were in harmony, loving all things that were pure and lovely and of good report. He had not yet discovered that plane of inspiration where our eyes open to things immortal, and we reverse our appraisal of the things that perish, but he refused to descend to that dark plane where men wallow in things carnal and destructive.

He was sixteen years old when the last imperial ceremony was held in Assisi. In 1197 Count Conrad, who had finally abandoned Spoleto, where the Guelfs had become stronger than the Ghibellines, began to feel the growing influence of the communal spirit in Assisi, which his own laxity had fostered. He remained in the castle with his retinue and garrison. Its great strength induced the widow of Henry VI. to commit the little Frederick II. to Conrad's care. The child was only three years old, and the Assisans witnessed

his baptism in San Rufino, in the font where, sixteen years before, Francis had been immersed. "It was," says Cristofani, "the last flash of imperial splendour." Fifteen bishops and cardinals helped to christen Frederick, who was to give the Papacy more trouble than any of his predecessors. But who that visits San Rufino thinks now of the heir of the Empire of the West? It is Francis, heir of the Kingdom of Heaven and entered into his heritage, that draws us thither.

Early next year Innocent III. became Pope, and Perugia, Assisi, Foligno, Trevi, Spoleto and Rieti declared for his sovereignty. His legate took over, not only the castle of Assisi, which the townsmen attacked and wrested from its imperial garrison, but also the guardianship of the child-king of Sicily in Innocent's name. Conrad tendered his submission at Narni, and surrendered all lands, cities and castles, which he had held for the Empire. The Assisans set themselves to the work of pulling down their castle, its double walls and towers, determined in their new-found freedom from the foreigner to offer no eyrie for another bird of prey, but they strengthened the walls that girded their city and built towers of massive form and foundations to protect the lands restored to them.

Pope Innocent required a very absolute subjection from his Umbrian cities, and signified that his love and patronage depended on their obedience, and it is grimly entertaining to note that along

with the loyal protestation towards his Holiness, they prosecuted these labours and appointed their consuls and deliberated their own affairs. The people were now the masters, although they gladly admitted to their commune and its privileges such of the nobles as had been loyal to the town, making them consuls and conceding to them the right of forming a body of cavalry in times of war. They attacked those nobles, however, who placed themselves in haughty opposition to the commune, and who kept bands of retainers to infest the suburbs and harass the citizens.

In all these doings Francis doubtless had his share, for we find him, after this revolution, mounted like a young noble of the commune, and ready to take his part in cavalry expeditions. Till 1202 Assisi was engaged in these historical and domestic affairs, and it must have been a time of strenuous education for her citizens, and amongst them for Francis, the most observed of her *jeunesse dorée*. He was twenty-one years old by the time the new fortifications were finished, the castles of the suburban counts destroyed and civic peace restored for a short interval. We might also venture to surmise that he had borne a gallant part in those years of energy and revival, for the anecdote of a man, accounted a character in the town, who would spread his mantle for Francis to tread upon, and bid men note him as a youth called to future greatness, seems to point already to distinction. Giotto painted the incident, apparently well

INCIDENT IN THE YOUTH OF FRANCIS

From Giotto's fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi

known in Assisi, emphasising the gentle humourousness with which Francis accepts the attention, as of one saying: "Why are you doing this?"

He was busy, too, in his father's shop, and showed considerable commercial aptitude, which disposed Bernardone to leniency when he was extravagant. Madonna Pica grieved over her son's tastes and caprices. She feared that they might lead him into places more dangerous than the wayward paths of romance and chivalry. She prayed for him without ceasing, and comfort was vouchsafed to her anxious mother-heart, for when the neighbours gossiped to her of his mad doings, she answered calmly: "I have hope, that if it please God, he will become a good Christian."

And, indeed, his compassion for the poor betrayed his preservation from that worst of ills, the blunting of human tenderness, the hardening of the heart so often incident to those who live for pleasure.

It was a time when few were rich and many were poor. The crusaders had filled all countries with the disbanded remnants of armies consecrated to conquest, doomed to failure. The oppression of foreigners had forced poverty on the masses. Lands were left uncultivated; the troubles of those days checked industry and commerce; pestilence followed war, and famine was the handmaid of pestilence. Malarial fevers and plagues abounded. The refugees from the East brought leprosy and ophthalmia with them. Wherever men came and went—blind, emaciated, covered with sores, in

rags summer and winter—the beggars chanted their doleful demand.

Francis, with that sensitive sympathy for sorrow which belonged to a nature responsive to every human emotion, was prone to constant charity, even in those days of careless mirth and festivity. His compassion would possess him like a sudden flame, to be quenched only by bountiful giving, and years before his conversion we hear of his frequent charity, even to the parting with his robes and mantles when cold storms from the east covered the mountains with snow and mendicants shivered by the wayside.

One day, when his father's shop was full of customers, a persistent beggar annoyed him with asking for the love of God. Francis repulsed him in a moment of pressure and impatience, but his tender conscience reproached him with the reminder that, had the man begged in this count's name or that baron's, he would not have sent him away, and yet he had driven from the door one who begged in the name of God. So he ran after him to tender alms and ask his pardon.

But in 1202 Assisi was again involved in war. The suburban counts, whose castles she had destroyed as far as Nocera, at that time within the radius of her suzerainty, conspired to avenge their wrongs upon the valiant little commune. Amongst them was Count Girardo di Gislerio, who, having lands near Perugia, made submission to its podestà, and conspired with seven other dispossessed nobles

to secure its assistance against Assisi. His castle of Sasso Rosso had not only been damaged, but, with its lands, had been given to Count Favorino degli Sciffi, an Assisan of rank.

The opportunity was eagerly accepted, for Perugia longed to place the hated town under her griffin's claw. The Assisans flew to arms, refused to reinstate the Lombard and German counts, whom they no longer accounted fellow-townsmen, and boldly advanced across the plain to meet their foes.

Francis rode in the body of patriotic cavalry. The encounter took place between Bastia and Ponte di San Giovanni, about midway between the hostile cities, and proved to be a defeat for Assisi, and their foes returned to Perugia with the spoils of victory and many prisoners, amongst whom was Francis. For a whole year he and his companions were kept in custody. While the others lamented and grumbled, he retained his cheerfulness, made plans of glorious adventure for the future, boasted even a little in his humourous fashion. "One day," he said, "you shall see how the whole world will adore me." His day-dreams were of glory and success, although we cannot judge what he exactly meant at a time when young imaginations found nothing impossible in heaven or on earth. But he spoke straight to the grumblers, and refused to share in their unkindness to a fellow-captive whom they disliked and whom he consoled and reconciled to the rest.

After their fellow-townsmen had suffered a year's imprisonment, the Assisans agreed to submit the difference to arbitration, and the judges sentenced them to repair the castles, to restore the lands despoiled, and to receive the exiles back again, on condition that they made no further attacks on the citizens, and pledged themselves to enter into no alliance with their enemies in future. So about the end of 1203 Francis returned to Assisi with his fellow-captives.

CHAPTER II

CONVERSION

1204—1206

Illness—The Porta Nuova—Walter of Brienne—The Expedition from Assisi—Return—Penitence—The Vision of Poverty—Farewell to Friends—The Poor—At Rome—Heresies—San Damiano—Renunciation.

SOME slight demoralisation had taken place in his nature. Prison fare and monotony must have been not only distasteful, but positively harmful to his health and mind, and the close companionship of men more vicious in habits and conversation may have tainted him with cynicism, since he could scarcely have isolated himself from his comrades. We find him plunging more recklessly than ever into the gaiety from which he and they had fasted perforce so long. And it may be that this excess hazarded evil as well as fantastic extravagance. If we accept Celano's first biography, we are bound to believe his sinister account. But we shall do well to remember that it was written under the influence of Brother Elias, who seems to have been at once artisan and schoolmaster in Assisi during this time, not included in the doings of its leisured youth,

and perhaps disposed to account their conspicuous follies as altogether evil. And even if his ungentle disposition did not wilfully deepen the shadows, he may have in some tortuous manner suggested them as a contrast to the life which was to follow, so as to make more resplendent the change from spiritual death to life. Francis, weakened physically by captivity, could not stand the strain of this outbreak of dissipation, and fell seriously ill. For weeks he lay in danger, but his mother's prayers and nursing helped him through the crisis, and slowly he returned to a measure of health. In the dark house below the main piazza he lay helpless through the first months of 1204, until the days began to lengthen, and the sun rose earlier behind Foligno and sank later behind Perugia.

We know nothing detailed of this illness, but are perhaps justified in accounting it the true turning-point of his life. He had aspired to the best as he understood it. He had touched his goal and had known the delights of the life that now is—a dazzling social success, the stress and strain of great events, the joy of battle with his peers. But the glamour passed at the touch of adversity. He had seen the gallant bearing of his friends turn into squalid peevishness; he had learnt that the brilliance of rank, wealth and youth faded under the sullen cloud of failure. It was a semblance then and unreal. The *élan* of battle was not fortitude. There were apparent virtues which could not endure the shock of opposition. They were

phantasms. Some such despair may have possessed him as he slowly rallied, and underlying its oppression there may have germinated that seed whose increase is of God.

When he was once more able to walk he took the level road leading to Porta Nuova, least difficult for an invalid, and went to where the gate opens upon the grim shoulders of Monte Subasio, upon the high Apennines beyond Foligno, upon the lower range on whose slopes glitter Trevi and Spoleto, and upon the olive-yards and mulberries descending to the plain, all perchance, that spring afternoon, steeped in bluest atmosphere. He tried to recover his former rapture in the scene, but could not. His very love of natural beauty had lost its thrill. His youth had been wasted on shadows, and not even nature could console him. Nor did there seem for the moment any other source of consolation. For, though the hand of God was upon him, he knew it not. The Divine processes are slow, and most of us scarcely attain to be unweaned babes in the spiritual life.

Francis turned sick at heart from the dregs of the emptied cup, finding them bitter to his taste, but to drink the living water was not yet in all his thoughts. Religion was a duty, doubtless, but not yet the breath of his being. There were, however, possibilities in which he might recover his old *joie de vivre*, and these, in the opinion of that age, were hallowed by the sanction and example of the Curia.

Restored to health, he resumed his rich vestments

and his habit of riding out of the city to the plain. One evening he found at the wayside an old acquaintance reduced to beggary. He dismounted and clothed him in his own rich mantle, providing for his immediate wants. It seems to have been from this man that he learned of the victories gained in Puglia by Walter de Brienne, who was fighting for the restoration of the papal fiefs in the south of Italy, favoured by Innocent III.'s benediction. The Pope's champion was a hero in the eyes of all Guelfs, for he had overcome the German army twice against great odds, and he was regarded as a leader specially protected by God. Francis was easily induced to accompany the poor knight whom he had befriended, and who intended to seek service under Count Walter. So he was occupied in fitting out his friend and himself with the arms and trappings necessary for their expedition.

Its object was almost a crusade; nothing could have been more attractive to a mind regaining its health without recovering its content with his daily conditions. Filled as his imagination was with day-dreams of glory in the tented field, it is not wonderful that his sleep was haunted by visions of arms and banners. Some faith in his destiny he had always manifested — half humourously, no doubt — but caught from his popularity, from portents and predictions, and none the less real because it had not spoilt his sweet and gracious bearing. But in the vision recorded by his biographers there is an element absent from mere reflection of the day's

preoccupation. Some one seemed to show him a many-storied palace, whose arcaded chambers were filled with shields and arms and banners, marked with the Cross of Christ, and when he asked to whom these belonged, his guide replied: "They are for thee and for thy knights."

Arms they were for Christ's service, which he did not yet understand, but towards their use his reason was gradually to be directed. For the moment he was intoxicated with the thought that he was designed by God to be a great leader in battle for the Church.

Madonna Pica's heart must have bled to see him so joyous at the thought of leaving home for the perils of war once more, and his friends rallied him on his spirits and ridiculed his confident assertion: "I know that I shall become a great prince." Still, some of them agreed to go with him and to follow the Assisan count, who proposed to mend his ruined fortunes by the venture.

Francis was appointed his page. The party started one morning for Spoleto by the road which wound round Monte Subasio, passing below the Benedictine monastery and the Castle of Sasso Rosso, both on the flanks of the grey old mountain. At Spoleto the first halt was called. But excitement, fatigue, and perhaps some return of fever, shattered Francis, and he was left behind next morning with half insulting raillery on the part of the others. Another dream had signalised that night for ever. "Francis," called the voice of God, "who can make

thee the better knight, the Master or the servant, the rich man or the poor?" "The Master," said Francis, "not the servant, the rich man, not the poor."

Then said the voice: "But thou leavest the Master for the servant and the rich man for the poor."

And Francis said: "What dost Thou will that I should do, O my Lord?"

And the Lord said: "Turn thee back to thy own land, for the vision that thou didst see meant heavenly and not earthly equipment, and it shall be given thee by God and not by man."

Obedient to the vision, Francis gave up all thought of rejoining the band of Assisan soldiers, and rode slowly home that day, revolving in his mind this grace vouchsafed of direction in the path of the Spirit. It must have been from this time that he felt it was to no mundane glory he was being guided, but rather to the glory which vanquishes the world. One wonders how the struggle shaped itself, how keen were the pangs which moved him, as one fair temporal hope after another took on the likeness of a phantasm and trembled into nothingness at the potent presence of these unwonted and unseen realities. One wonders how his spirit stirred and shook as their amazing intervention became indubitable; how the unequal contest agonised and astounded him; how, step by step, the spiritual gained upon the temporal, whilst his shrinking flesh cried aloud in the suffering of death.

Only this we know: he obeyed, and, in obedi-

ence to the Will, he found the Way, the way of the Cross, Christ Jesus, from which he never swerved. But when he returned to Assisi, this stage was incipient, not attained, and he was still in the throes of bewilderment and upheaval.

His parents and friends were astonished at his return ; his father was indignant, for he had paid for the costly accoutrements on which Francis insisted for his friend as well as himself, and the least he expected was loyalty to the enterprise and some glory for his son on which to plume himself. But here he was back again, the victim, too, of a new eccentricity with which the paternal purse had to reckon, but which in no way gratified the paternal ambition. For Francis was now possessed by a passionate charity towards the poor, and by a growing distaste for the society of the rich, so that his extravagances brought in no interest of distinction, and were doubtless the cause of increasing displeasure at home, where his brother Angelus, careful in expenditure and keen in bargaining, had ingratiated himself with Bernardone.

Charity and solitude—to these Francis seemed vowed already, although he did not yet realise that charity could not be done with the goods of another, but must be purchased with self-sacrifice. He had no experience of a material want unsatisfied, and he could not yet discern the difference of value of the satisfaction of a moral want.

In the meantime he sought lonely paths and retreats, and found a sheltering cave on the way to

Beviglie, a mile or two north-west of Assisi, where he could spend long hours of penitent prayer and of waiting for God's next mandate. For a constant penitence began to characterise his mental attitude towards God. We are told that a man of Assisi was much with him in those days, to whom perhaps he owed the new light upon those gay doings of his youth which he now deplored.

There is just a possibility, indeed almost a probability, that this friend was Bombarone, afterwards Brother Elias, of whom we last heard as mattress-maker and schoolmaster. Now, all the indications brought together by Dr. Lempp, in his recent *Biographical Study* of Elias, point to his possession of a powerful, persistent, and dominant mind, of a character made austere by circumstances, which had encouraged the growth of bitterness in his nature; and we can well imagine his impressing upon the sensitive Francis the enormity of those masques and revels of which he had been the soul for seven or eight years. Constant weeping, constant penitential prayer altered the whole mien of Bernardone's once brilliant son, and to these God left him for a time. Too gracious to turn his back upon the old comrades, he sought indirectly to avoid them. But he did not yet abandon all his old habits of costly dress and knightly manners, of riding down to the plain, where forest trees clustered more thickly than now, and where his horse might pace under the shadow of oaks and elms, whilst its rider was lost in self-accusing thought.

One day a leper accosted him as he rode along one of the ancient ways, now little used, except as short cuts to the fields and olive-yards. The man seemed hardly human in his deformity, and for a moment Francis shrank from so gruesome a spectacle. But recalling Christ's gentleness to lepers, and his own contrition for that leprosy of the soul which he believed himself to have contracted, in deep humility he dismounted and embraced the mendicant, kissing the disfigured hand, which he filled with money. And then, as he regained his seat, he looked round for the leper, who had vanished, perhaps among the trees, and he rode on convinced that God had bidden him sacrifice for ever all those delicacies of feeling and habit which hindered his perfect obedience. From that day he was aware of a new vision flitting through his vigils, haunting his dreams—the vision of Poverty, without whose constant presence he could not fulfil the complete behest of God. He pondered over this vision until it sank into his very soul. Poverty had been the bride of Christ upon earth, had trod the dusty ways of Galilee at His side, so that never had He turned from the abject, the outcast, the diseased, but having no place where to lay His head, He had given healing and hope to the despised and rejected of men. Nigh twelve centuries had passed since the Apostles died and left Poverty to the care of them who were like-minded with the Master, but she was fallen on evil times, for Church and State strove for wealthy brides and

esteemed nothing so little as Christ's beloved. To him, perchance, she was bequeathed, that in true union with her he might go and come as God directed him, nothing hindering him, since the sweet ministrations of that bride must fortify him against all needs, must preserve him unentangled in the cares of this world.

He would remember the story of Peter Waldo, whom the Church had banned, and begin to think out some humble way in which one might be an apostle of the poverty of Christ and yet be in the Church and serve it. Not even to the man who sought him on the plain did he tell all that was in his heart, for his aforetime expansiveness had deserted him and he was learning that there is only One to whom all things can be told, and had begun to seek that mystic communion which grants the needed sympathy and betrays not at all. Down in his retreat near Beviglie he spent long hours in prayer, in cries for guidance, for a Divine commission.

His friends were puzzled at his altered mien and habits; they thought him scarcely recovered from fever; they could not suppose themselves to be no longer sought as his companions. One day, however, he invited them all to a banquet, and they rejoiced to think that his gaiety was restored, and that once more he would be the lavish king of their revels. They sat long at the table that night, while he ministered with all his old grace and hospitality—then, rising with songs, and shout-

ing, they surged out into the piazza to fill it with their festal clamour. But Francis was no longer with them, and when they turned back to claim his company they found him standing lost in reverie, his spirit far from them. "Ah!" they cried, "he thinks of some fair lady, who has rapt away his heart; wilt thou marry, Francis?"

"Yes," he answered, a look in his dark eyes which no man had seen illumine them before, "I think of a spouse lovelier, richer, purer than you can possibly imagine."

It was his leave-taking. Doubtless they thought him mad, for they troubled him no more. They fell from him by the inevitable law which groups the spirits of men into those who seek the temporal and those whose eyes begin to apprehend the eternal. They knew well that it was of no earthly spouse he spoke, and they had no mind to follow him into the heavenly places.

But the moment for his unity with poverty had not yet been indicated, and he spent days upon his knees in solitary places.

If the friends of his thoughtless years were gone, there remained to him such friends as Jesus had—the blind, the lame, the leper, the poor. More and more he spent his time, his money, his affection upon them, and was astonished at their gratitude, for they counted him as little less than an angel, and that they treated him so proves what no words can represent—that personal charm which, even to these hardened outcasts, prevailed over the fact of

his generosity and meant for them far more than his giving what they demanded. From the cave, from the Portiuncula, that little chapel amongst the trees, from San Damiano, higher up the slope, but on the city verge and not within its walls—he went amongst them, his eyes shining with the light of prayer, his voice thrilling with the joy of doing the very work Christ chose to do, and they knew that he was not as other men who flung them careless alms. For God gave him daily freshness of love for the friends of Christ.

We do not know how far he received guidance from the Church at this time. His confessor is not so much as mentioned, nor do we hear of his seeking the Duomo or even San Giorgio for devotional purposes. Many churches Assisi has always possessed, and of those within whose walls her people still kneel when the Host is raised, still make meek confession and receive assurance of God's pardon, there are some where he too must have adored, whose ancient bells he must have known when they rang out their call to worship. Such are the Duomo, San Giorgio—included now in Santa Chiara—San Pietro, San Paolo, San Damiano, San Nicolà, San Giacomo, and in the belfries of Santa Maria Maggiore and San Stefano swing to this very day bells to which he must have listened.

But it is of humble shrines and impoverished churches that we hear as his favourite resorts, and of no priest at all for the present, only of the unknown man, who may have been Bombarone.

How lonely he must have been—unwelcome at home, except to his sorrowing mother, who was not wholly unconsoled. Bernardone's anger against him waxed as the summer waned, taking on a note of fierce contempt for the madness which had befallen him.

We do not know by whose persuasion he went to Rome, whether Madonna Pica sent him thither for the counsel refused at Assisi, but he rode to Rome in the autumn of 1205, doubtless after his father had set out for the north and west. There his objective was St. Peter's, at whose tomb he prostrated himself, emptying his purse upon its altar. As he left the basilica he found, crouched upon its steps, a host of beggars. Surely in that prayer at the tomb he had vowed himself to their service, had betrothed himself for ever to the Lady of his vision —for he asked one of them to change tunics with him, and, like a knight before his initiation, he passed a vigil, lasting all that day, down upon the steps, begging from the passers-by, tasting the bitter-sweet cup of renunciation. It was both his vigil and his sacring, and from that day he was the knight of poverty, the champion of the unchampioned, the hero of a tourney whose umpire is Christ Jesus, whose prize is life everlasting.

On his return he occupied himself wholly with the poor, and especially with those whom leprosy had banished from the city and the villages, and who were herded together in squalid communities here and there upon the plain. Perhaps it is true

that he appealed to the Bishop of Assisi to give him some light, even some authorisation in ministering to those outcasts, but probably the bishop saw in Francis one led astray by heretical teaching and refused to assist him in his work amongst the lepers. For strange missionaries were going to and fro, sent out of Viterbo, and there is a record of a voice lifted up in Assisi calling men to a mysterious peace. It is certain that Francis was more and more left to himself, and that he had no help except the growing assurance that what he did was well-pleasing to God.

The Church was indeed sick nigh unto death, distracted by war without, exhausted by defection, betrayed by internal corruption, while no period of its existence was ever more signalised by papal pretensions and spiritual impotence.

One day Francis went down the rough path, which leads to the small sanctuary of San Damiano, hidden then more effectually than now by a thicket and falling to pieces from neglect and the poverty of its worshippers. As he passed through the olives, whose size and beauty are greater on this slope than lower down, and felt the sweet influences of these visionary trees—whose shadow on the ground is as the shadow of a shadow, whose silvery foliage gleams and glooms in quick response to sun and cloud; who seem to sigh and smile with sorrows and raptures of their own, as if they were acquainted with unseen woes and welcomed celestial visitants—he may have almost

THE CRUCIFIX OF SAN DOMINICO

looked for an angel amongst them, for some radiance with a message to guide him. Certain it is that, with mind remoter from the world than common, he kneeled to pray at the foot of a painted crucifix, old even then and beautiful to-day, where it hangs in San Giorgio, as it was to him. "Send Thy light into my darkness," he implored; "O Christ, my Lord, let me know Thy holy will." And in the silence he saw the figure of the Crucified quicken into life, and lo! Christ spake to him: "Francis, go and restore My falling Church."

Then he knew that his cry had been answered, that he was God's accepted servant, commissioned to do a mighty work.

He did not yet realise the wreck within the Church, whose imposing structure blinded men to its real condition, nor was he fully aware that faith was an outcast from its palaces, whence poverty had long been driven, and that patience, chastity and hope had followed them into the wilderness.

So, eager to obey, and that at once, he looked about him at the crumbling sanctuary, and remembered how San Pietro was time-worn and no longer proof against the weather, and how the chapel beloved of his mother, Santa Maria degli Angeli, was falling into ruin. This, he reasoned, must be his work—to repair God's sanctuaries and to make them fit for His presence. His purse was nearly empty. Pier Bernardone was at home and did not care to supply him with money, sure to be squan-

dered on the lepers. So he gave the priest of San Damiano all that remained to him. He was used to take what costly stuffs he needed for his clothing. It did not occur to him that he was not entitled to them for a purpose infinitely more sacred and more pressing. Bernardone was not in his shop at the south-east corner of the piazza, so he took some pieces of the finest cloths and silks, made them into a parcel, mounted his horse and rode to Foligno, ten miles away. There he sold both merchandise and horse and came back to San Damiano on foot, intent on taking up his abode with its priest and on providing for its repair. The priest, however, knew Bernardone's character, and, although he willingly allowed Francis to stay, he refused to take the money. With some movement of petulance Francis flung the rejected coins out of the window, since they were not deemed worthy of acceptance. Bernardone missed the stuffs and heard the story of their disappearance. He waited in vain for his son's return, and as the evening darkened into night he realised that Francis had left his home. A search for the fugitive began, and soon Bernardone knew that he was at San Damiano. With a crowd of followers he hurried down the slope to drag him home. But Francis heard the clamour as it neared and fled to some concealment prepared for this emergency. For days he hid from his father's rage, scarcely knowing what to do, until the resolution came to him to go back, declare his firm deter-

mination to obey Christ's call, to give up his life at home and to consecrate himself to the work of repairing the neglected sanctuaries.

As he climbed to the piazza, pale with sleeplessness and fasting, a crowd of children followed him, shouting in mockery: "The madman! the madman!" hurling stones at him in savage delirium, covering him with mud, mimicking his gestures and his words of entreaty. Bernardone came to the door of his house, drawn by their tumult, to find his son its centre, a pitiable object, bruised, bleeding and in rags, while his tormentors howled with delight. The furious merchant seized Francis by the throat, drew him out of the street and flung him into a cellar in the staircase. To what public disgrace had the reprobate brought his wealthy and respectable father? Either he was mad indeed, or so perverted that imprisonment in the dark was the only treatment likely to bring him to his senses. But the treatment failed, for neither abuse nor blows served to change his mind. He was resolved to leave father and mother, to take up his cross and to follow Christ. His cross was already well bound to his shoulders, and its weight was rapture as he realised that just such sorrows were the very signs of his acceptance. At last Bernardone left him alone, but locked the door upon him. Three days later he quitted Assisi on business, and Madonna Pica went to her son with gentle entreaties for his return to filial duty. But he was pledged to God, and the old life seemed to

him no more than dust in the balance compared to the new. His mother let him out of the cellar, and he went straight to San Damiano. There he braced himself by prayer for the coming struggle. His father returned, and it is said that he struck his wife a cowardly blow when she confessed her share in their son's escape. Then, in an excess of rage, he hurried to San Damiano bent in forcing Francis to leave Assisi. But prayer and guidance had fortified the latter, and he met his father outside the sanctuary with calm and happy face: "Do not think," he said, "that anything in the world can turn me from the love of Christ, for whose sake I gladly suffer all things."

Bernardone angrily demanded the money paid for his stuffs, and Francis showed him where it lay beneath a grating. Picking up the coins, and consoled by their touch, he sought to tempt his son by promises of wealth and indulgence to return with him. But Francis said: "I desire no other wealth than the poverty of Christ." "Then that thou shalt have," cried Bernardone; "come with me before the bishop and renounce all right to thy mother's dowry, all claim to what I might have given thee."

With joy Francis followed him to the bishop's palace in the little piazza of Santa Maria Maggiore. Guido was then Bishop of Assisi, second of his name, a wise, learned and impulsive man. The angry father came before him, followed by Francis, who was radiant with the joy of suffering for Christ's sake. A crowd of citizens pressed round them to

THE RENUNCIATION

From Giotto's fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi

hear the matter, but, before it could be judicially discussed, Francis went into a room, stripped himself of all he wore and returned with a bundle of his garments, which he handed to his father, saying: "Now have I no father for ever, but our Father who is in Heaven." The bishop, moved to tears, embraced him and covered him with his own mantle until a servant brought a coarse tunic in which to clothe him. And then the people, seeing the bishop's care for him and his own happiness, and knowing well the greedy, ambitious and irascible nature of Bernardone, were smitten with wondering admiration for the grace which God had done in their midst, calling from amongst them and setting His seal upon the spoilt darling of their city, the gay comrade, cavalier and soldier, whose career was as familiar to them as their own from his birth till that day in the winter of 1206.

CHAPTER III

THE BROTHERS MINOR

1206—1210

The Benedictine Convent—Gubbio—Cesena—San Damiano again—Santa Maria degli Angeli—Francis Begins to Preach—His First Followers—The First Mission—A Crisis—The Second Mission—Pope Innocent III. and the Order.

FRANCIS had given up father and mother and wealth for Christ's sake. We can only surmise what that meant to his tender heart; but the sacrifice was complete; he was now Christ's alone, and the joy of that transfer filled his mouth with praise.

He left Assisi, perhaps in obedience to some word of counsel from Bishop Guido, which he understood to be Divine direction. He took a rough path on the flanks of Monte Subasio, through the woods, which darkened as the March afternoon closed. Snow lay on the mountain and drifted into the wood; his feet were bare and only a coarse garment covered him; but he was singing with all his might, for on the breast of his tunic he had drawn a cross in chalk, the badge of a Master whose service is

perfect freedom from earthly care. As he climbed and sang, his voice reached the ears of a band of robber-outcasts who lurked in the wood. They came down upon him and roughly asked him who he was. "I am a herald of the Great King," said he, "and nothing more that can concern you." They shouted with laughter, dealt him blow after blow and, stripping off his garment, flung him into a snowdrift, crying as they left: "There, that's the place for the herald of God."

When they had gone, Francis rose and went on his way, singing as loudly as ever, although chilled to the bone and almost naked. Further east, and still higher up the slope of Monte Subasio, stood the Benedictine monastery built nearly two centuries earlier. To its gate he bent his steps in the darkness. But when a lay brother opened and heard his petition for food and shelter, he was not greatly attracted by the shivering, beaten and unclad beggar before him. The monks sent him to their kitchen, gave him a dry crust of bread and a ragged shirt, and set him to earn these bounties by acting as scullion to their cook. But he felt their suspicion of his veracity and suffered from their meanness, which went to the verge of starving him. So after a few days he left them and made his way to Gubbio, where he stayed a short time with a friend called Spadalunga, who cared for his necessities. It is on the site of this friend's house and garden that the beautiful church of San Francesco, at Gubbio, stands. He used his absence from Assisi

in seeking advice and experience, but we do not know exactly how long the interval lasted, nor where he spent its greater part. When he left Gubbio, it is probable that he sought counsel from the holier hermits in its neighbourhood. There existed for a century after his life a common report amongst the peasants of Romagna that he dwelt for more than a year in a hermitage near Cesena. This spot lay in the shelter of a thick wood, covering an ascending valley, which separates the slopes of two hills. Both wood and hermitage have been swept away to make room for vines and corn, but Signor Finali, who has described the place for us, often passed in his boyhood under the shady oaks to the cell, of which no vestige now remains, except a ruined fountain surmounted by a rude figure in terra-cotta. Here, in the time of Francis, lived a holy hermit, a Mantuan by birth, Giovanni Bono. He was one of those who practised the Rule of St. Augustine, so-called, a gospel Rule, which prescribed poverty, prayer and charity. His dress was a tunic of the common grey cloth worn by the peasants. The hermits of this order, as well as the Dominicans, maintained, somewhat to the annoyance of the Franciscans, that St. Francis wore the grey habit and professed the hermit's Rule for some time before returning to Assisi. If their contention is true, he must have acquired the first principles of his own Rule from the good and much venerated Giovanni Bono, whom the peasants loved because of his ministrations amongst them, and because

when food was brought to him, he shared it with those who had none. But whatever probability there is in the tradition, Francis needed no direction but Christ's in all that pertained to such ministration, for he had already surpassed the hermit's care for the poor in his work amongst the lepers outside Assisi. Wherever he may have been, he recovered strength, serenity, the full use of his great faculties, mental, practical and spiritual. When he returned to Assisi he was joyous, alert, decided, sure of what God meant him to do, prepared to be led step by step into spiritual service —that service of which the Church and the world stood in such desperate need.

His first visit was to the leper settlement near Santa Maria degli Angeli, where still the two field chapels of Santa Maria Maddalena and San Rufino d'Arce—in old times known as San Lazzaro—mark the shrines where these poor outcasts of both sexes knelt for worship. They received him with joy, and he returned to San Damiano prepared to take up the work which he had temporarily quitted, no longer as the young and wealthy citizen of Assisi, but as the spouse of poverty, clad in a grey habit, begging for others. The poor priest with whom he lived soon loved him as a son, and would cook little delicacies for him at meal times, until Francis entreated him not to spend money upon such things, since bread and water were sufficient.

He was bent on restoring the three churches

fallen into disrepair, and set about collecting stones from the citizens, for which he paid by singing like a wandering minstrel. Some of these still maintained that he was mad, and his sorest trial was meeting Bernardone, who never failed to curse him. But he allowed nothing to discourage him in collecting stones and mortar, which he carried on his back to San Damiano. At other times he asked food and alms for his sick and poor, and what little was necessary for himself, so that he might not bring expense upon his friend, the poor priest, and when, in going his rounds, he met his old companions, or was aware of them assembled at some banquet, he would overcome his shyness and go to them to seek a gift in the name of Jesus whom he served. He chose a poor townsman to go about with him, so that when he flinched from his father's curses, the man might bless him and restore his spirit.

His brother Angelo made a mock of him whenever they met. Once this happened in a church on a cold day of winter. Francis was shivering in his grey tunic, while the other was warmly wrapped in fur-lined mantle over a long robe of cloth. "Go to Francis," said Angelo to a friend, "and buy a ha'porth of his sweat." "No," said Francis, "it is of greater value to God."

What Madonna Pica thought, if she still lived, we know not. Doubtless she said nothing, but pondered all these things in her heart, like the blessed mother of our Lord, that woman of perfect

dignity and of perfect wisdom, a miracle amongst women.

It was at first very hard for him to overcome his repugnance to the scraps and leavings of food which he brought home, and he had to put his fastidiousness under the control of his spirit. So he called his meals the "table of the Lord," and ate what was before him with words of praise. He had conquered, one by one, his love of company, of fine clothes, of rank and wealth; his aversion to squalor, disease and misery; his daintiness in food and surroundings. All were laid upon the altar of obedience, and for all God gave him a thousand-fold of their anti-types in the spiritual life—for parents and friends, His own continual presence; for rank, sonship of the King of kings; for garments, the robe of righteousness; for wealth, "all things"; for personal fastidiousness, a purity, tenderness and joy which lifted him above the annoyances of daily experience.

The weapons marked with the cross were gaining him the victory. His vision was in course of fulfilment.

For some time he laboured at his double charge of repairing the churches and of tending the lepers. There was another settlement of these besides the rough lazar-houses near the Portiuncula. This was at a considerable distance from San Damiano, some seven miles westwards, at Collistrada, where cypresses mark a burial ground on a hill to the left of the road going to Perugia, while a cluster of stone

pines, rare in Umbria, attracts our eyes on the other side of a group of buildings, one of which may have been the hospital. Hither he bent his steps from time to time, carrying food and alms for its wretched inmates, and here, too, he was known and loved.

His labours at San Pietro and San Damiano came to an end, and he began to restore the little church of the Portiuncula. Day after day he toiled down from the quarries with his burden of stones and mortar, and fitted them into the breaches made by storms and time and rough usage. As the winter of 1208 passed he completed his undertaking, and Santa Maria degli Angeli was not only weather-proof, but swept and cleansed with that delicate care which he practised, and later enjoined, regarding all things used for the service of God.

He grew more and more attached to this humble sanctuary, and spent much of his time in prayer and meditation within its walls. Some features of the hermit life characterised this period. So many hours of work, so many hours of tending the lepers, so many hours of solitude, prayer and contemplation, with tears of penitence, of praise and of patient waiting upon God's further will.

Santa Maria degli Angeli belonged to the Benedictines on Monte Subasio, and one of them came to say an occasional mass at its altar. One day in February, 1209, mass was being celebrated there. Francis was the sole worshipper, and the monk turned towards him as he read the gospel for the

day from St. Matthew: "As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat."

He listened with wonder; it was an endorsement of the rule of poverty, but it seemed to include more than that. It meant not the repose of the hermit's life, not the mere working out of his own salvation. As he went on his way he must preach and say: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It was the new direction from above, and the voice was the voice of Christ. Again he was ready to obey. Not in vain had he called himself the herald of God. On the very next day he went up to Assisi and began to preach. He had divested himself of all forbidden in the gospel, and with bare feet, and a rope tied round his grey tunic instead of a belt, he entered the church of San Giorgio, saluting all whom he found there with the words: "My brothers, God give you peace." And then in simple language he proclaimed the coming of Christ and called on all to repent. He used no rhetoric, no eloquence; but every word uttered came like a flame of pure light from that illumined spirit, and the listeners knew that for him all things were nought save only Christ, and Him crucified. A change of feeling towards Francis had

been at work during the years after his renunciation, especially influenced by his labour amongst the lepers and at the ruined churches. Men were ceasing to think him mad and had begun to realise that he was God-inspired. They listened to him now as to one of the Divine oracles, so that he never lacked a congregation when he entered one of the many churches of Assisi with his greeting of God's peace.

Peace was much needed in the city, where internal dissensions prevailed. The Assisans had been slow to satisfy the conditions concluded with Perugia; many of the exiled counts were still living there awaiting the restoration of their castles, and discussion was hot as to their return. We have reason to believe that from the time of his preaching Francis was consulted by the commune on these matters, and gave advice always on the side of righteous fulfilment of obligations, the events which followed being marked by a sense of responsibility to God very unusual in the settlement of altercations at that time. That their outcome was both peaceable and orderly we shall find three years later, when mutual concessions were made both by nobles and people.

At this time the church of Santa Maria Maggiore was restored, and engraved on the outer wall of its apse are the words: "In the time of Bishop Guido and of Brother Francis"—surely a contemporary testimony to the extraordinary personal influence exerted by the "poor wise man" in his city.

Indeed, his life, known and read of all men, rayed out power wherever it was encountered and felt, and the old sovereignty of personal charm and wit was transformed into a new sovereignty of holiness and wisdom from above.

We can therefore better understand the effect of his call to the life of prayer and labour on those of his hearers in whose hearts there pulsed already a deep longing for God. We are not surprised to learn that two out of his three first followers were "simple men". And when we read in the *Actus* how the third was converted, we are constrained to believe that had he not been a wealthy noble the chroniclers would have called Bernard of Quintavalle a "simple man" as well. For all three were transparently honest, full of faith in the unseen, humble and teachable, just such as God loves and men are prone to despise. They were, in the order of their coming to St. Francis, Peter of Assisi, Bernard of Quintavalle and Egidio, the last perhaps the simplest of all, but destined to confound the wise and console the mourning, to convince the doubting and convert the unbelieving. To no one of the early Franciscans does the tradition of heavenly-mindedness so impressively belong as to Brother Egidio, a man of such contrite heart that God dwelt very visibly with him. But he was the third to join, and the *Rule* of the "little flock" was decided before his adhesion.

When Bernard of Quintavalle, convinced of the rare grace granted by God to Francis, and longing

to come under its power, determined to join him, the saint, notwithstanding his joy, gave proof of that sound judgment upon which the commune had learned to draw, by proposing that since the life of renunciation was hard, they must lay the whole matter before the Lord, who would Himself be its judge and their counsellor. So they repaired to St. Nicholas' Church, whose door is still to be seen on the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, and, after the office, knelt long in prayer for guidance. The curate of St. Nicholas was their friend, and he consulted the gospel text when their minds were prepared to accept its mandates. The first time he opened it these words met his eyes: "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow Me." The second time, the very gospel which had lately impelled Francis to preach was on the open page, while the third test of Bernard's faith was found to be the great and strenuous commandment: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

Bernard bowed his head in obedience to all three, and leaving the church, he and Francis at once set about selling his houses and possessions, and bestowing the money realised on hospitals, poor monasteries, the neediest townsfolk, conquering by their action the heart of a miserly priest, who joined them later as Brother Sylvester. Then, having finished this affair, the brothers passed down to the

plain, and a new stage in the Franciscan movement was initiated.

The passages read in the church of St. Nicholas were adopted as their Rule, and so without novitiate, without function, with a dignified directness which passed by the tedious preliminaries of monastic custom, they proceeded to obey its injunctions. This was the only *Rule* whose vital importance Francis ever recognised, and the additions and alterations incorporated later were wrung from his bleeding heart by persons and circumstances as yet unforeseen. For to him Christ, and Christ alone, was the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light, and he sought to rescue his little flock from the "many inventions" by which the Church had obscured, weakened, falsified His commandments. Francis was His servant, following in His steps, never side by side making footprints on the way which men might mistake for his Master's. For there is no parallel possible between Francis and our Lord; they are sundered by the Godhead itself. Christ was no penitent; not for His own sins did He atone upon the Cross. Francis was always a penitent, for the errors of his youth, for the blunders of his twenty years of saintliness. His service to the world was to make Christ's will the first and last and only rule of conduct; to prove all things by that rule, and so to choose and reject. His crucible was scathing, and much shining metal dimmed and shrivelled in its flame.

The three brothers, soon joined by Egidio, took

up their residence close to the Portiuncula. Their dress consisted of two garments, an under shirt and a tunic of the home-woven grey cloth used by the peasants, with a cape and narrow hood, and fastened round the waist by a cord. Francis could not impose four guests on the poor priest at San Damiano, and apparently their first homes were built of mud and roofed with wood after the old Umbrian plan. He was an experienced builder, and must have been both architect and overseer of this work, although we may be sure that he gave far less care to the construction of these rude shelters than he had given to the sanctuaries.

The brothers had no thought of relapsing into the tranquillity of hermit life. They were the heralds of the great King and knew their marching orders. No sooner were these simple preparations completed than they left two by two for the March of Ancona and for Tuscany.

Francis took Egidio with him, Bernard's companion was Pietro. From village to village, from city to city, from castle to castle, climbing the hills and visiting every corner where humble homes were built, the missionaries called to repentance, exhorted to the life of holiness, proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

Francis was filled with joy, and when they returned to the Portiuncula to count up their gains for the Master, he could hardly restrain himself from predictions of a world-wide success. From solitude he had been planted in a family, from the

despite of men he had been raised into their honour, from penitential weeping he had been transferred to the gladness of accepted service. As they journeyed, they sang; they encountered all with joyous smiles; for a morsel of bread, for a few hours' rest in an outhouse, or under the shadow of a tree, they tendered the bread of heaven, the peace that passeth understanding. And men listened and welcomed their message. Some mocked, but that was the very sign of God's presence with them. "Happy are ye when men shall persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you for My sake." This pledge of acceptance was not denied them.

They had just entered upon a crisis, which only that invincible attitude could withstand. Three others joined the brotherhood, men who sold all they had, gave it to the poor and came down to the plain. The matter was becoming serious. Those who expected to inherit were indignant. Had any man the right to disappoint his heirs by scattering abroad during his life what should accrue to them at his death? This new development, unconventual, unauthorised, threatened to destroy the very foundations of civilised life, to attack the time-honoured institution of adding field to field, of storing wealth which should ensure unearned privileges for generations of descendants. There was a reaction against Francis and his followers. Even the bishop, who had given him a cautious measure of protection, was alarmed at this aspect

of his influence, for the dissipation of large sums amongst the needy was no gain to the Church and might disturb her authority. Unless these men could be haltered and reined by monasticism, their growth into a numerous body was a menace.

The matter excited a passionate interest, and the bishop decided to intervene. Francis was sent for. Guido remonstrated with him on his manner of life, its want of responsibility, its uncompromising poverty. Doubtless this last rankled in the clerical mind, and induced the priests to make common cause with the laity. Devotion to the name of Christ was all very well, but devotion to His poverty and preaching was extremely inconvenient, and must be diverted into cloistered silences, where it could do no harm. But Francis stood, unapproachable as a celestial being, clothed in Christ Jesus, gentle, humble, aware. "If we had possessions," he answered, "we should need arms to defend them; for from them arise questionings and strife; and thus the love of God and of our neighbour is hindered. And for this cause, we desire no worldly wealth." What an impeachment of the Curia, busy then with armed resistance to Otho in the south, lurked in these unanswerable words. For Guido found no further argument against their manner of life, and contented himself with forbidding his preaching in Assisi, where the matter raged for a brief interval incited by indiscreeter men, both priests and laymen. Amongst the gentler people there was a growing affection

for Francis, as if in him and his followers Christ were lifted up, and drew others by a magnetism greater than they knew. But with the controversy the brothers occupied themselves not at all.

They were eight now, and it was the spring of 1210. It was time to go forth in different directions to save men by example and by precept. Francis sent away six and took the eighth himself, each couple going towards one of the cardinal points. "Go," he said, "preach repentance to all men, without concern that ye are of little account and ignorant, for God, who has overcome the world, will speak in you and by you to the converting of many. But fear not when men oppose you and refuse your message, for soon even the nobles and the wise will be with you, preaching to kings and to princes and to the nations." And blessing them one by one—"Cast all your care upon God, who careth for you" he said to each.

This time Bernard took Egidio with him and turned towards Florence, while the others, two by two, went on their respective ways. The adventures of the brothers in Florence are given by the *Three Companions*, and vividly represent their faring and its incidents. One point stands out in relief from the simple narrative, and that concerns the attitude of the first brothers towards alms. St. Francis is constantly accused of converting the Umbrians, if not the Italians, into a horde of beggars. It is quite certain that the Church has done so by hindering industrial development and independ-

ence, by making it meritorious to give to all who ask without the laborious processes which constitute effective charity, so that idleness and professional vagabondage have been studiously encouraged. Assisi was, as we have noted in her history, a pauper city a thousand years before Francis was born, and her misfortunes increased the percentage of her begging population. This was, indeed, the very evil which Francis sought to remedy by the practical means of adopting poverty and giving an example of how it should be used. Of all things, he contemned idleness and wanton beggary most. To his thinking they were more shameful than wealth, for just as surely did the squalid material preoccupations of mendicancy estrange the soul from God, as did great riches. Therefore work was ordained as an equivalent for whatever men gave to the brothers, and they were not permitted to accept more than was immediately needed. Their daily hunger must be satisfied, the garments from time to time must be renewed, but both these needs were reduced to their minimum, and for supplies a fair return was made in the cornfields, the vineyards, at the olive gathering, in building, repairing, portage. We constantly meet with instances of money refused, or flung aside with contempt, a difficult lesson to teach, but strenuously insisted on. And we discover in this artless account of Bernard's and Egidio's preaching in Florence a proof of their care for "the dignity of the Lady Poverty," when in a Florentine church they declined to receive

money from Messer Guido, because they had become voluntarily poor by the grace of God, and for that reason were not troubled by their poverty at all, as those were upon whom it weighed like a load. Hospitality they accepted in the form of simplest food and shelter, and they gently declined all superfluity. For the true Lady Poverty has her delicacies and reserves, and is, indeed, a dame of highest birth and breeding.

For the peace of God, which they bestowed as His almoners, they accepted the slight return of a meal and a shelter. Sometimes these were not forthcoming, and then they bore their temporary discomfort with cheerful patience. Whining was unknown in those glorious days of the initiation of the order.

If they had gone forth with ardour, they returned to the Portiuncula with joy, and perhaps we may fix the season of Pentecost as the date of their glad reunion.

But some of his experiences, and amongst them the prohibition to preach in Assisi, had decided Francis to take a step of the utmost importance. Apparently they brought back three new adherents, or were joined by these on their arrival. Including Francis, the poor penitents of the Portiuncula had attained the number of Christ's disciples. He knew that as they increased difficulties of the kind already met would increase also. He could not contemplate monasticism as a solution of these difficulties, for the work which God had called him to do was in

the wide field of the world, not in walled seclusion. But that he might silence rancour and avoid failure, he must be possessed of authority, to which his detractors would bow. The brotherhood was to become a pattern to the world, for nothing is so much emphasised by his early biographers as his insistence upon such behaviour in all things as should commend and adorn what they preached. Indeed, so sensitive was he on this point that he constantly trusted to example alone, forgetting that it is a sermon which reaches the few and eludes the many, who may emotionally admire goodness without a single effort to practise its stern behests. Fortunately, of those silent sermons his companions took note, and they are eloquent to-day. He believed that the humility, simplicity and forbearance of the brothers would prove their safeguard, so he devised for them the name of Brothers Minor when it became clear to him that some such title was necessary to their organisation. "A new people" they were to be, "and an humble," the "little flock" which Christ desired of the Father.

This point being settled, he wrote out the gospel Rule, which so many leadings had indicated and confirmed as their guide of conduct, hid it in the breast of his tunic, and calling his company together joyfully started for Rome. A happy dream gave him courage, and commending themselves to God the twelve poor men took the way southwards in August, 1210, just when the days were hottest, but when, too, the shadow of thick foliage lay on

the narrow roads leading straight as a dart from point to point. We do not know exactly how they went, probably by Spoleto, Narni and Civita Castellana, but we do know that they were filled with hope of a speedy return, bearing their credentials with them. And their hope did not make them ashamed, although its realisation was vouchsafed from the very crisis of despair.

When they reached Rome they sought out Bishop Guido, of Assisi, who was there at the time. He was glad that his words to Francis had so far taken effect, and expected that the Brothers Minor would be placed under his authority, so that he might guard them from zeal beyond discretion. He welcomed them, therefore, and secured for them the countenance of Cardinal Colonna, one of the most influential members of the college, doubtless acquainting him with the difficulties of the case and with their leader's prepossession in favour of a non-monastic, but evangelical and missionary, Rule. The cardinal, full of questions and obstacles, listened to all that Francis had to urge on behalf of his vocation, but, while praising his manner of life, he sought delicately to suggest its conversion into monasticism. He confronted the unassailable attitude which had already blunted assaults from many would-be advisers. Francis answered gently that he had received both call and Rule from Christ Himself, and that his obedience was to Him. Again, that pure flame of faith was triumphant, and Cardinal Colonna knew the presence of one

whom the Master needed. He promised his support with Innocent, who, as we have seen, was in no mood to waste audiences upon obscure suppliants.

But he granted them one on the terrace of the Lateran known as the "Moving Mirror," and they knelt before him while he gave a scanty attention to their plea out of courtesy to Cardinal Colonna. He was by no means prepossessed with their appearance, and took them for some new faction of the Patarenes or Albigenses, with whom he waged an exterminating war in Languedoc. They were curtly dismissed as his impression took this form, and Francis left the Lateran stunned with disappointment, although scarcely in need of the Pontiff's farewell admonition to ask God to make known His will. He and his followers, reeling under this blow, betook themselves naturally to prayer.

God was on their side, for Innocent, a few nights earlier, had been startled by a dream of the Church of St. John Lateran, which seemed to be falling to the ground, except for a poor man who bore up its walls with arm and shoulder. Somewhere in that haughty spirit there must have stirred an accusing consciousness of the Church's decadence, whence rose this threatening dream. It returned to his recollection, nor could he forget the suppliant brother's arresting face. Perhaps it recalled his vision, which proved to be a prevision. By whatever means God ruled his mind, it is certain that

POPE INNOCENT III'S DREAM

From Giotto's fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi

he decided to see Francis again. Some of the cardinals objected, but Cardinal Colonna talked over the situation with him and recalled the blunder made by Alexander III. when Peter Waldo was dismissed.

So Francis, found at work in the Leper Hospital, was sent for. He had received new inspiration from prayer, and when Innocent turned upon him a face more favouring and more expectant than on the previous day, he spoke this parable, which came from his lips almost as if his Master breathed it, so wholly was it in the manner of Him who spake as never man spake.

"In the desert dwelt a woman very poor, but very fair. A great king espoused her, knowing that her children would be fair as she was, and she abode with them in the wilderness. But when the eldest were tall, she said to them: 'My children, you have no cause to blush, for you are the sons of the king; go, then, to his court and he will supply all your need.' When they were come to the court the king wondered at their beauty and at their likeness to himself. 'Whose sons are you?' he asked, and when they told of their mother who lived in the desert he pressed them to his bosom, saying: 'Fear not, for you are my sons; if bastards sit at my table, shall not you who are my well-begotten?' And he sent messengers to the poor woman bidding her send the others too. I am, most Holy Father," said Francis, "the poor woman, whom God's love has rendered fair and my sons

are begotten of God. The King of kings will nourish these my sons, for if He receives even bastards, will He not far more gladly take care of His own?"

It was a bold word, for did he not claim for the children of his Lady Poverty alone the lawful begetting of the sons of God, and how scathingly did he class the luxurious princes of the Church as "bastards".

But it convinced some tortuous depth in Pope Innocent's mind, which hoped to win the new order as an accredited force against heresy, and he granted them authority as preachers and missionaries, making Francis superior of the Brothers Minor, who were required to submit to the tonsure. It is possible that the saint was ordained deacon at this time. The Pope, full of affectionate protestation, took every step, short of alarming their leader, to mark them as his own.

FRANCIS AND HIS FIRST FOLLOWERS PRESENTING THE RULE TO POPE INNOCENT III

From Giotto's fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi

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CHAPTER IV

THE THREE ORDERS

1210—1212

The Return from Rome—Orte—Rivo Torto—Santa Maria degli Angeli—The Carceri—Increase of the Order—The Third Order—Clare degli Sciffi—The Poor Sisters of Penitence—San Damiano—Rule of the Second Order.

THEIR long delay in Rome ended at last, and, forgetful of all else but their freedom to return, the Brothers Minor set out from the Porta Salaria by the summer-parched, sun-smitten road to the north. They might have perished on the way had not a traveller given them food. Their modest triumph at the Curia had been discounted by incredulity, mockery and contempt, but out of the furnace they had snatched authority to exist, to preach, to go out beyond the seas with the gospel message. In their simplicity they did not realise that the grip of the Pope was upon them. They were not even concerned that their gospel Rule had not received his endorsement, bore no pendent seal of authorisation. It was Christ's Rule, and, with its clauses, His Vicar might not meddle. Had there been a flaw in their faith they could hardly

have survived that terrible journey in the glare and malaria of early autumn. As it was, they were exhausted by the time they reached Orte and took refuge from the heat in some ancient tombs in its neighbourhood. In their cool depths they recovered physical equilibrium, and from prayer and praise they drew renewed moral and spiritual strength. For a brief moment it seemed to them good to abide where these tabernacles were provided, and where they could forget, as in a hermitage, the clamour and distressful worldliness which they had left behind at Rome, and a measure of which awaited them even on the beloved Umbrian plain. Here in quietness they might pass their days, and the nearness of the place to the world in which their spirits loved to dwell, the presence of God which gladdens every solitude, almost overcame their resolution. For, in a nature so exalted as that of Francis, retreat to a desert place to pray held out a constant allurement battling in his mind with that call to work which he obeyed. Indeed, the tradition that he practised a Lenten fast and meditation nine times a year grew doubtless from his growing need of such retirement to recruit those spiritual forces which were exhausted in the desperate pressure of his duties.

They stayed a fortnight here, going two by two to the town and villages to preach, now armed with Innocent's sanction and listened to with respect. Their simplicity, directness and cheerfulness acted like a charm on the peasants and the poorer towns-

folk. We can hardly realise how great an influence that authority to preach the poverty of Christ must have exerted upon those oppressed with indigence and toil, to whom heretofore no consolation had been offered. Priests, monks and dignitaries they knew, but never one of them unwilling to add to his possessions, disposed to lay up treasure in heaven. The men who decried such and lived laborious days were under the Pope's ban, went to and fro with their lives in their hands. But these happy pilgrims, messengers from Christ truly, had, what was even more impressive, the Pope's leave to teach that it was a Christ-like thing to be content with bread and water, to give brotherly aid at the vintage and with the plough, asking a crust, a handful of grapes for recompense; to comfort mourners and to preach the coming of righteousness, peace and joy. Wherever they went or tarried men and women gathered round them, wondering and listening to what had been spoken twelve centuries earlier, but had been silenced. Their homeward journey lengthened into a missionary itinerary, and when they reached the Portiuncula at last, it was to pour out their praise and gratitude for the first fruits vouchsafed.

Francis knew of a deserted lazar-house, called Rivo Torto, of which they might make a dormitory. With a good deal of crowding, each brother could find in it space to lie down and sleep, and he assigned to each his post. The settlement was close to a torrent from Monte Subasio, some bend

in whose course gave it the name of Crooked Bank, but both stream and bend have disappeared. In turn, the brothers cleansed and swept their dwelling, which was little more than a shelter for meals and sleep. The "table of the Lord" was not always furnished with food, but they cheerfully ignored their lack. Faithfully they ministered to the lepers, providing first for them. Their number continued to increase, so that some of them went out to heal the sick in other villages far and near, where they were welcomed as leeches not unskilled in binding up wounds, in the use of herbs, in the treatment of familiar ailments.

They acted as a new hope and a new consolation, and carried about in their own persons a new pattern of life—not merely a stolid endurance of suffering, but an ardour for toil and destitution as if they were a privilege hitherto unrecognised. So they cast out the devils of discontent and selfishness, and filled with songs of praise men's mouths, that had railed against God and their neighbours.

What the appearance of St. Francis in the peasants' houses and the little towns meant for all who hurried to greet him and gaze on him, we may gather from that volume of story known as the *Actus*, collected perhaps in the fourteenth century, perhaps earlier, from many sources, some of true biographical value, others legendary, but bearing the seal of verisimilitude, others wholly mythical, and yet loyal to the impression made by the saint's charm and hallowed gaiety. They have been

recently published by M. Sabatier from a beautiful and ancient manuscript in his possession. From the *Actus* Brother Ugolino of Monte Giorgio translated into Italian that collection of its chapters known as the *Fioretti,* in which we find St. Francis more truly and sweetly limned than in all the biographies—a collection made a century after his death, but to-day reverenced and read in Italy as its most precious classic. The *Fioretti* express what the people of Italy meant by their beloved saint, and are his apotheosis in their heart.

We have already noted his influence in Assisi. The compact between nobles and people, referred to in our last chapter, belongs to the close of 1210, and the very terms used to express its two contracting parties point to St. Francis as their source, for they are no longer sundered as nobles and common people, but united as the greater and the minor members of the community. To the minors, thus delicately distinguished, he gave the name of those whom Christ has chosen from the wise and noble, and to whose company might belong such of both as were willing to give up all for His sake.

Other towns followed this example and the influence of the Brothers Minor in civic politics became a memorable factor throughout Italy.

Several popular stories refer to their short stay in the lazar-house of Rivo Torto. Hither came the Emperor Otho to seek an interview with Francis, who warned him of his brief term of power, a prediction fulfilled with the appearance

of Frederick II. Here, too, the brothers were aware, one Saturday night, of a vision of celestial light, which they knew to be the spirit of their beloved superior, who was sojourning two miles away in a little arbour made for him by the canons of the cathedral, whose greater comfort he would not share, since his companions were huddled within the narrow walls of Rivo Torto. Permission to preach in Assisi was restored. He had turned the tables upon those who founded their opposition to the Brothers Minor upon their want of legalised organisation, for the Pope had granted them license to preach and had not meddled with their doctrine.

Some of the earliest adherents sought to emulate their superior's abstinence with zeal beyond discretion. One night they were roused by loud groaning, and Francis, finding that it came from a brother sleepless on account of starvation, took what remained of the day's store, and ate with him that he might not feel convicted of carnal appetite—bidding him temper his fasts with common sense, since it availed little for the spirit if the body broke down altogether. We hear, too, how he coaxed another brother, invalided and suffering, out in the early morning to a vineyard, where he began himself to eat ripe grapes, and to encourage him to do the like, as they were wholesome for his malady. This must have happened soon after their return from Orte, about the time of vintage.

Perhaps the winter months were responsible for their occasional semi-starvation, for the rains

stopped all industry, and a handful of turnips or beans provided but a scanty meal.

In spring, 1211, they were driven from the lazar-house by a rough peasant, who wanted it as a stable for his ass, and Francis decided to beg from the Benedictines on Monte Subasio the little church of the Portiuncula, with its adjacent clearing in the woods. His friends at the Duomo had no spare land to bestow upon the order, but the Benedictine Abbot, Maccabeo, gave him the sanctuary of Santa Maria degli Angeli, on condition that it should remain to all time the metropolitan of the Brothers Minor. Joyfully did the saint agree to so sympathetic a contract, and he voluntarily undertook to send a yearly rent, consisting of a creel of "the little fishes which be called roaches," to the monastery. Once a year some gentle brother had a good day's fishing, perhaps in the Chiaggio across the plain, or in the Topino close to Bevagna —memorable streams, for one had quieted in death the tortured body of Assisi's bishop-martyr, and the other is immortalised in Dante's *Paradiso*. Even Izaak Walton could scarcely have taken a basketful out of the Tescio. We may be sure, however, that the happy angler used no bait temptingly disposed upon a hook while Francis lived, and that short work with a net would put bounds to his sport.

Thankfully the brothers flitted to their "little portion". They built huts of wood and clay after the old Umbrian pattern, each with a tiny herb-

garden at its rear. According to an old print, there were two rows of huts facing each other, between the first pair of which stood the church, and behind it a hut for infirmary purposes, somewhat larger than the others. As new members swelled their number, huts were added, but not till much later was the double fence or hedge planted to serve as a boundary wall. All round grew the forest, and from their enclosure the brothers coming and going could look up to Assisi and her castle. But the print is little more than two centuries old, and we cannot trust its details as correctly picturing the first settlement, although it may preserve its plan. The hut assigned to Francis is placed to the right of the church and close to the infirmary. Down at the spot we recapture no impression of its first simplicity. A huge and inharmonious basilica covers the sanctuary, which has itself been desecrated by modern frescoes, so that but one part of its outer wall is unspoilt, that entered by St. Benedict's door. Within things are a little better: the altar is less tawdry than usual, and we can reverently touch the bare walls which Francis restored before his call to preach. For these rough walls constrain us to our knees in humble seeking after the God who dwelt with the Brothers Minor.

Here then at last was a rest for the soles of their feet, a centre for their gatherings twice in the year. For they desired no abiding city, since it was their business to go out into the whole world.

But, even for these pilgrim apostles, some tryst was essential, and they found it here. It must have been about the same time, or earlier, that good Maccabeo gave them leave to seek the caves of the Carceri for meditation and prayer. It was certainly while the order was in its infancy, for the hermits of the Carceri were St. Francis and his first companions. Between the third and fourth shoulders of Subasio a deep ravine has been worn by a vanished torrent; trees climb its steep walls, remnant of the forest which once covered the mountain's massive flanks. Here, on a morsel of plateau, the Benedictines had built a couple of chapels, where the office might be said and sung, and in one of them they hung above the altar a sweet Byzantine picture of the Madonna, old as the crucifix of San Damiano. Themselves reduced in numbers, they were unable to spare monks for so many settlements. So they willingly opened its retreats to the Brothers Minor, who found caves to sleep in amongst rocks which overhang the gorge. The noise of the torrent, the rustle of ilex and plane-trees, the song of birds, the bark of some nocturnal fox, perhaps the howl of a wolf in winter-time, were the only sounds to distract their thoughts. Santa Maria dei Carceri Francis called the spot, and climbed thither from the plain when his recurrent hour of panting for the living God called him away. For, like his Master, he needed the wilderness for prayer, and amongst his followers he rated highest, not the busiest and most bustl-

ing, but those who steeped themselves from time to time in holy solitude and spent long days and nights in prayer for themselves and all the world. They were his "paladins of the Round Table," whose going forth was victory. His own cave lies below the chapels, while the others are on either side the ravine. He could pass from it into the woods, where cyclamens and pinks, yellow orchids and white stitchwort, honeysuckle, citisus and broom still recall the spring and summer jewels which gleamed for his delight. And on the trees perched his little brothers, the birds, who gathered about him as about a presence harmless and beloved, and whom he included in his gospel preached to all "creatures," for did they not day and night praise God and outweary the very saint himself, when he tried to cap their strophe with his antistrophe?

Here he filled his soul with restoring peace, and here he fought out those spiritual battles, known now as then by every farer on the narrow way, but which then seemed to take the form of a hand-to-hand combat with the very prince of darkness. To his sensitive conscience the faintest longing for physicial comfort, the merest stumble on the rough way of the Cross, was nothing short of diabolic temptation, to be resisted unto death.

Abbot Maccabeo's generosity to the Poor Penitents—continued in later times by Benedictines to Franciscans—is all the more interesting to us that it doubtless sprang from the Umbrian birth of their

own great founder and saint, and we may infer from these repeated benefactions their conviction that Francis, too, was a saint. Green Umbria gave to the Christian world her two greatest reformers, and although seven centuries lay between their actual lives, the recognition of the later by the disciples of the former is a striking testimony to his worth.

New adherents joined the Brothers Minor from Assisi, the villages, the peasant homes. Amongst these was Brother Leo, who, with Brother Sylvester, represented the clergy. More fortunate was Francis herein than his Master, to whom came no priest even by night. But with increase followed difficulty, for some were recalcitrant at times. Thus Brothers Sylvester and Rufinus loved the passive better than the active side of his Rule—made happy hermits, but poor labourers and unwilling missionaries. Brother Egidio was the exemplar of his "Round Table," humble, prayerful, obedient, devoted to the service of Lady Poverty, ministering joyfully whether as day labourer, as menial at the lazar-houses, as gospel herald, as messenger on business of the order.

When rich young men sought admission, Francis warned them forcefully of the hardships to which they must submit; when the poor desired this life of perfection, he rejoiced that for them its way was not so narrow, not so rough. But numbers flocked to him of rich and poor alike. Some, too, whom years and duties prevented from becoming Brothers

Minor, petitioned for acceptance as members practising the Christ-life "in the world, but not of the world," and during those glorious years many men and women thus obeyed the doctrine. This development was a sign of the glad welcome given to the teaching and example of the friars. Francis gave little heed to the organisation of these informal adherents. To him they meant that the Kingdom of God was come, and he did not enrol them as devotees, but as men and women who obeyed the call to repentance.

It was not till ten years later that the Pope subjected them to a Rule and to observances, which bound them together for convenient employment by the Church. No longer, after 1221, were they to be considered as leaven whose contact would spread abroad the gospel fermentation, but rather as a body set apart for definite devotional purposes not to be expected from the world at large. After the saint's death they were still further separated and constrained, and we may accept M. Sabatier's surmise, based upon exhaustive research, that the date of this second and stricter organisation belongs to one of the years between March, 1228, and November, 1234. St. Francis was averse to their first enrolment, and only submitted to Cardinal Ugolino's advice because of some laxity in the so-called "Third Order," due to his absence in the East, but his consent to every step taken for the furtherance of papal control was wrung from his unaccording judgment by *force majeure*.

But during the first months of 1212 he found himself face to face with a new departure. Near the church of San Giorgio rose upon massive foundations the storied palace of Favorino degli Sciffi, Count of San Savino and of Sasso Rosso. To this day its walls endure, arching across the street on both of whose sides they stand. Close to the Communal Palace, to the Duomo, to the Porta Nuova, its site commanded all municipal stir and movement as well as the southern and eastern gates of Assisi.

Count Favorino was a strong man, who possessed himself of Sasso Rosso after the expulsion of the Gisleri, and held it for himself or for the commune. During winter he lived in the town with his family, of whose members we become acquainted with four. These were his wife—a lady of the old house of Fiume, her own name Ortolana—and his three daughters, Clare, Agnes and Beatrice. The eldest of these, Clare, was now eighteen years of age. From childhood she had manifested an exceptional devoutness, coupled with great tenderness towards the needy and suffering, as well as much strength of character, by which she impressed and even swayed those in contact with her. Clare was familiar with the whole history of Bernardone's son, although but a child when he renounced the world. She, too, felt the hunger within for more than meat. She went to hear him preach in San Giorgio and in the Duomo, whither she was accompanied by her aunt, Pacifica dei Guelfucci, a pious

woman, to whom she could confide her spiritual longings. Some home trouble increased her aversion to the world; probably Count Favorino's intention to wed her to a suitor whom her beauty and dower attracted, but who was antipathetic to her nature. Her heart was given to God, the life of poverty filled her day-dreams as a shining pathway to the world of light; perhaps her home offered no counter-attraction. She longed to leave a sphere where she was little needed, and which could not satisfy her ardent mind. With what expansion of soul she would walk in the way found by Francis, if only she might be admitted. She meditated his words of flame, his conviction, his joy. He was the one human being she had ever seen in whom Christ was lifted up, the one man in whom faith throbbed, about whom a celestial light trembled, who bore in his very aspect the credentials of God's herald. And his message was a Divine command. She induced her aunt to go with her to Francis, to whom she told her need. He bade her wait and pray. Again she saw him and entreated for admittance into the service of poverty. He pointed out its hardships, its austerities inconceivable to one so gently nurtured, but her eyes glowed at the prospect and he understood that she was called of God. So at last he consented, and fixed the night of Easter Sunday, 18th March, 1212, for her reception. Her aunt and a friend called Madonna Bona agreed to bring her to the Portiuncula. Apparently Count Favorino was ignorant of his daughter's resolution,

but we can hardly imagine that her mother knew nothing, for she herself was a devout woman, whose heart turned altogether in later years towards the same life of poverty and labour. For Francis the moment must have been critical. He was a deacon in orders, it is true, but there was no provision made in his plan for the admission of a woman. M. Sabatier calls our attention to his masterly treatment of the situation. Brother Sylvester was Clare's relative, and another follower was a friend of her family. Perhaps he took counsel with them, but it is more likely that he understood at once the value of such an adhesion, the need of holy womanhood to complete and perfect the work of holy manhood, the infinitely greater influence on the world of a spirituality to which both minds, consecrated and sanctified, might contribute all that makes each the complement of the other. Women were the healers and consolers of men when these were bruised and baffled. They were skilled in nursing, in cooking, in needlework. Their hearts went out in sympathy, their minds were swift, their powers of observation keen. They were more open to the light from heaven than men, capable of insight for which they could not account, and if apt to peril their souls in the world, surely blessed with a celestial purity when they lived within the fear and the love of God. He had looked into the depths of Clare's candid nature. He saw more there than the qualities common to all women whose gifts have not been wasted on paltry and

selfish aims. He recognised her lofty mind, her power of enduring for Christ's sake, her wisdom and restraint, her courage and supreme spiritual health. He felt that she was given by God to lead women into the way of Christ as he led men.

There was no hindrance to her admission, for her father's consent was not required, but it was necessary to find a home for her until the new way opened. So he went to San Paolo, near Bastia, and made arrangements with the Benedictine prioress for her residence until a permanent settlement could be secured.

After midnight, Clare and her companions left her father's house, stealing out of an arched doorway, still pointed out amongst several close together and the narrowest of them all. Silently they passed down to the Porta Mojano, whence the road led, with two sharp turns, to the Portiuncula. How solemn their flight must have been, shrouded in darkness, amongst the spectral olives, the budding oaks and elms, past a farmhouse or two, and past the hospital of San Salvatore delle Pareti—built by the congregation of the Cross-bearers half-way between the city and Santa Maria degli Angeli—the young girl absorbed with the joy of her vocation, the older women half afraid but wholly dominated by her will. Along the mile of straight road they sped, reaching the sanctuary just as Francis and his followers were at matins in the first hours of Easter Monday. The brothers, with lighted candles in their hands, came out two by two to

receive her, and led her to the altar. There Francis celebrated mass, and there they knelt until the last "Amen" rose to heaven. And then he read aloud the stern law of poverty and labour, the gospel Rule, whose clauses might not be violated. Clare bowed her head in token of obedience, an obedience unrelaxed during her forty-one years of further life. Francis, on whom the tonsure had been forced by Innocent, cut off her hair and left it on the altar. Her rich robes and mantle were relinquished, and, clad in a grey gown and black veil, Clare began to live a poor Sister of Penitence. Surely some spasm of pain wrung the heart of Francis as he consecrated her to poverty in the morning of her youth and beauty, but he had no misgiving about the step, for he had none about God's will.

The two trembling women bade their charge farewell and turned back to the city, apprehension at their hearts. And Francis led Clare westwards on their long walk to San Paolo, while the dawn stole up behind Foligno and Trevi and lighted them as they stood at the convent door.

How these two hours were occupied we long to know—perhaps for most of the way in holy silence and in prayer, and towards the end in gentle encouragement and counsel from Saint Francis. Nothing is so saintly as a saint's bearing towards women, that mingled appreciation, affection and reverence divine in its character, which a pure womanly soul repays with devotion untainted by vanity or earthly soilure. Such a friendship is filled with God and is immortal.

Next day Clare's father arrived at San Paolo, accompanied by several friends, and determined to take her home, but his reproaches and entreaties were of no avail. The prioress, however, disapproved of such scenes, or perhaps feared Count Favorino, and Clare was transferred to the convent of Sant'Angelo in Panso, within the city, where now stands the Diocesan Seminary. Hither, a week later, her sister Agnes fled from the unquiet home to join her, and received the tonsure from Saint Francis. Count Favorino, with a number of male relatives, rushed to the convent, and in his fury struck the child repeatedly, dragging her away by force. But Clare came to her rescue as she fainted, and Favorino found her suddenly so heavy in his arms that he dropped her in the field adjoining the convent, which stood close to one of the city gates towards the north.

There, too, the sisters were vexed by hostile influences within the walls, as well as by their father's anger. Francis was sore put to it to find them a quiet retreat, where they could practise their vows in peace. He thought of San Damiano, secluded amongst trees, and applied once more to his friend the Benedictine abbot. For the monks, the time was one of crisis. Their number was reduced to eight; some of their monasteries had been sacked by the people during recent years of war and revolt; they had sought in vain to propitiate Assisi by the gift of the Portico of Minerva; they were anxious to reinstate themselves in popular

esteem forfeited by their degeneration from the early standard of monastic life. Francis was venerated by the citizens, and they gladly granted his request for a building which they had ceased to use, and whose ruined walls he had restored with his own hands.

To San Damiano the two sisters were conducted, and there they were joined by several other noble ladies of Assisi, and some years later by their sister Beatrice, their mother and their Aunt Pacifica. Clare was made Superior of the Poor Sisters of Penitence, and part of the gospel Rule was assigned to them for obedience. They were not required to go from place to place to preach and call men to repentance, but their duties were sufficient. Chief amongst them were tending the sick, feeding the hungry, making garments for the naked, distilling medicines and soothing draughts—all the gracious ministrations which women know so well how to render helpful, consolatory, tranquillising. They made altar-cloths and napery for the little churches used by the brothers, and for others fallen into neglect, and those amongst them skilled in embroidery copied the flowers in Clare's little garden and devised patterns for their work, since Francis loved both beauty and order in the setting of God's altars. His chivalry would not permit these Sisters of Poverty to beg from door to door, and some of his followers were appointed to do them that service. They built their huts near San Damiano to be at hand and to furnish bread and vegetables for their daily need.

CHAPTER V

YEARS OF INCREASE

1212—1218

Failure of First Attempts at Foreign Missions—Mount Alverna given to the Order—Increase of the Sisters of Poverty—Accession of Scholars—Cannara and Bevagna —Sermon to the Birds—First Visit to Mount Alverna —Missionary Itinerary through Central Italy—"God's Minstrels"—Lateran Council of 1215—Decree affecting the New Orders—Innocent's Death—Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia—The Pentecostal Chapters—Foreign Missions —Brother Elias—Francis in Rome—St. Dominic—Subiaco and Oldest Portrait of Francis—Chapter of 1218—First Murmurs against the Rule—Dominic and Poverty.

THE year 1212 was destined both to encourage Francis by an amazing development of the movement which he had initiated, and to check his premature efforts for its extension beyond the seas. When the settlement at San Damiano was provided for in every detail, and its young superior invested with power to receive new applicants for admission, the brothers were instructed to bring back such women as they found truly desirous of the life of poverty, labour and devotion, and their return from preaching was from time to time so signalised.

Francis then, concluding that the moment for missions outside Italy had arrived, made such plans for the home work as were required and started for the coast. This may have been in April or May, although it was probably not till after Whitsuntide. His longing was to convert the infidels in Palestine. We are not told whether he had a brother with him, for the details of this venture are very scanty, but it may be regarded as certain, seeing Christ had so ordained the conduct of missions.

From Ancona he took ship for the Levant, but crossing the Adriatic a fierce wind drove the vessel either on an island or on the coast of Dalmatia, then part of Slavonia. Here Francis lingered, hoping to find a passage to the East, but none was forthcoming, and he had to abandon the enterprise. A barque was being loaded for Ancona, and he asked its master to take him on board. He was refused, but, collecting a store of provisions from the people to whom he ministered during this delay, he hid himself amongst its bales, and the seamen were well upon their way before he was discovered. Storms drove them out of their course, and their own food was exhausted, so that Francis, emerging with enough for them all, was welcomed, and was soon after landed at Ancona. He made his way to the Portiuncula on foot, arriving in time for the Christmas gathering of the brothers, who had spent the months of his absence in home missions. Restoration to them consoled him for the failure of this heroic attempt, for many new brothers had

joined, amongst whom, perhaps, was Bombarone as Brother Elias, who for some years was his zealous disciple.

For 1213 he planned an extensive missionary tour in Central Italy, assigning its districts to his followers in pairs, and taking Brother Leo with himself to Romagna. He is said to have spent the Lent of this year in solitude, fasting and prayer, on an island in Lake Thrasymene, subsisting on a half-loaf during the whole period of forty days. After Easter he resumed his itinerary, and arriving at the Castle of Montefeltro with Brother Leo, he found great bustle of preparation for a tournament about to be held in honour of a newly-made knight. Amongst the guests was Orlando dei Cattani, Count of Chiusi, a man of large possessions in the Casentino. Entering the castle court, Francis found it filled with nobles gathered for the spectacle. He seized his opportunity, and spoke to them on the words: "So great a joy do I await that every toil is my delight." The guests listened to him and were touched by his sincerity. Count Orlando drew him aside and asked to be admitted amongst those who obeyed Christ's teaching at home, since his years and duties forbade him to join the working brothers.

After the tournament Francis held long converse with him, and received him into the congregation of faithful souls. Then Orlando offered him Monte Alverna, an isolated peak in the Casentino, as a retreat for solitude, prayer and contemplation, to be

used by himself and the brothers, and the gift was gladly accepted.

He returned to the Portiuncula for the Pentecostal assembly, at which reports were made of missionary success and failure in Central Italy, for it may be noted that the early Brothers Minor never cooked their reports, but faithfully recorded their blunders and defeats as well as their achievements.

So large a body of followers was now with him that he mooted a considerable enterprise for 1214. He and his brothers spread themselves throughout Italy, preaching the gospel to all who would listen, up to Pentecost and after the general conference. While he could trust them to carry on the home mission, he made a second personal attempt as a pioneer of foreign work.

The Kings of Arragon, Navarre and Castille had two years earlier chased across the Sierra Nevada their gallant Moorish invaders. Spain was left to the Spaniard, all the richer in art, science and education for its long period of submission to Arab domination. The exploit roused all Christendom, and was deemed a triumph against the infidel. Francis longed to carry his evangel both to Spaniard and Moor; hoped, too, for martyrdom, which was then the ideal goal of every saint. He took the westward route through Piedmont and Languedoc that autumn, and was away till the following spring. This time we know that a brother accompanied him, because the legend survives that, in his eager-

ness to reach Spain, he used to outstrip his companion and leave him far behind. But a veil falls here over the enterprise, and we only learn that he was so seriously ill that his companion brought him back again. His health, broken ever since 1206, when the rough treatment which he suffered on Monte Subasio sowed the seeds of constant delicacy, was not improved by fasts and fatigues. He came home saddened by a second failure, but convinced that God meant him for a time to work in his own land and among his own people.

The home mission had achieved unusual success. Large numbers had been convinced and converted; many had joined the order; some new sisters had been brought to San Damiano. Not only there, but in other parts of Umbria, communities of these ladies were formed, where sick persons were brought to be nursed, where work and worship went hand-in-hand, where cheerfulness and saintliness were practised. These communities retained a certain homeliness far removed from conventualism, and were altogether different from the nunneries of St. Clare, which took their place after her death. Apparently the Brothers Minor were also greatly increased in 1215, and their settlement must have been enlarged. Amongst the new adherents were men of every rank and character conciliated into harmony by the graciousness of their superior, whose discerning sympathy evoked from each all that was finest. Thus, we hear of a peasant called John, who, seeing Francis busy cleaning a dirty

church at Bastia, took the broom from him and swept it out with a will, and then asked to be admitted to the order. His family grudged his loss, but Francis won their consent by letting them keep his portion of the common heritage. This John became so true a follower in the way of the Cross that Francis tenderly spoke of him as Saint John.

At the same season Thomas of Celano joined, a man noted for his learning, who became one of the saint's biographers after his death. Other scholars were attracted to the order, and it is with some amusement that we read how Thomas of Celano believed himself and them to be the recipients of a special respect from their superior, although his precautionary measures against property in manuscripts indicate that he found them inclined to magnify their knowledge and to make of it a hindrance to their obedience. It is possible that Bombarone was the medium of their adhesion. For some years prior to his own admission he lived in Bologna, acting as a scrivener, and taking so great advantage of its university teaching that he was reckoned one of the most erudite men in Italy. He had a passion for learning, crossed by a counter-passion for devotion, both underlaid by lust of power, intermittent at this stage, but persistent as Francis lost ground, when the ebbing of his strength gave Brother Elias an opportunity.

There can be little doubt that to this group of scholars, with Brother Elias at their head, was due the mutiny within the order which wrecked

the saint's new covenant with God, and which broke his heart some years before his death.

But, although the coming and going of grey friars was now a daily spectacle on the roads in Tuscany, the March, Umbria and Romagna, they were not yet separated into filial colonies, as was soon to be necessary.

When the Pentecostal meetings and duties were ended, Francis, suffering from prostration, was for a brief moment disposed to abandon the active side of his vocation. He consulted Clare and Brother Sylvester, and received from them such resolute counsel to continue to save and to preach that he accepted it as God's message, and much heartened took the road once more. He went to Cannara, five miles south of the Portiuncula, and his sermons there were so effectual that the whole village adopted Christ's Rule as their own. From Cannara he went further south, and east to Bevagna. Brother Leo was his companion, and the sympathy between them, the beauty of the ways bordered with flowers—amongst them the delicate blue and white love-in-a-mist, which fringes the hedgerows in June, blue cornflowers, rose-coloured vetches, purple loose-strife, scarlet poppies, gay larkspurs and sheets of feathery bedstraw — the twitter of birds upon the trees, the fields ripe to the harvest, refreshed and uplifted his heart, so that his joy welled over in song. Where the birds gathered he paused, and, unalarmed, they clustered about his feet and on the branches overhead. In an

SERMON TO THE BIRDS

From Giotto's fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi

ecstasy of tenderness for his "little brothers" he spoke to them of their Creator, whose care for them deserved their love and praise. "For He has made you," he said, "the noblest of His creatures; He has given you the pure air for a home: you need neither to sow nor to reap, for He cares for you, He protects you, He leads you whither you should go." And the birds rejoiced at his words, opening their wings and fluttering and chirping as if to thank him for rating them so precious in God's sight. Then moving amongst them, he blessed them and went on his way.

At Bevagna we see still the beautiful buildings he looked upon, old San Sylvestro and San Michele, over whose door is sculptured the mighty angel destroying the dragon, eternal symbol of salvation, and above the market-place is the Church of San Francesco, built upon the spot where he was wont to preach. The snowy oxen in the meadows by the river Topino, which the brothers would cross and recross, the dark bastions of Monte Subasio, perhaps cloud-capped as they returned, the blue ranges opposite them, the greeting and welcome of peasant and townsman, willing to listen to their message, all must have cheered and stimulated him to renewed exertions. About the middle of August, he paid his first visit to the stern slopes and caverns of Monte Alverna. Here he spent six weeks in prayer and fasting, perhaps laying down at God's feet his longings for work abroad, for martyrdom, making a heroic sacrifice of those spiritual ambitions

which he had been unable to realise. For, beyond the offering up of all material aims, comes that astonishing experience of the Will of God, the surrender of sacred ardours and holy toils which hasten in advance of His command. It is the saint's keenest agony to withhold the uncommissioned service, which his heart burns within him to be about.

In October he renewed his itinerary, passing by Alviano, where crowds gathered to hear him, and where the wheeling swallows made so much noise that his voice was drowned, until he bade them be still and hear the word of God. Narni and the villages in its neighbourhood; Rieti and its beloved valley; Monte Colombo, where one Christmas Eve he made the first præsepio of manger, ox, ass and babe, and was himself astonished when the Child smiled up in his face as the Infant Jesus might have done; Sant, Eleuthero, Poggio-Buscone, were his next halting-places. From them he passed to the March of Ancona, where the Brothers Minor were best received, and where already many hermitages were filled with the apostles of poverty. The province of Ascoli seems to have been visited late in the autumn. About thirty new adherents formed the immediate harvest of this mission, and amongst them was Brother Pacifico, a poet and musician, who was of great service to Francis in regulating the music for their functions, and whom he encouraged in composing songs to be sung in the market-places, so as to gather together the villagers

and townsfolk. "God's Minstrels" he called Pacifico and his band.

In November, Pope Innocent held his famous Council at the Lateran, when seventy decrees were promulgated on Church discipline and doctrine, one of them annulling all religious orders which were not subservient to the Rule of either Augustine or Benedict. St. Dominic was in Rome seeking the Pope's authorisation of his new order, and in obedience to this decree he accepted the Rule of St. Augustine for his followers. We do not know how Francis warded off the interference of this ordinance, but it is certain that he escaped its working.

Not long after the Council, civic hostility compelled Innocent to leave Rome, and he found an asylum in Perugia, where the papal court was graphically depicted by Jacques de Vitry, who visited it there, and who contrasts its infamies with the charity, humility and orderliness of the Brothers and Sisters of Poverty, to whom he was greatly attracted. Francis was summoned to Perugia, probably because of his reluctance to obey the decree. He and other friars were there when Innocent died and when Honorius was elected Pope. The deathbed was deserted, the corpse was denied the commonest care. They were Brothers Minor who washed and clothed his body, guarding it with pious offices until the time of burial. Cardinal Colonna had died in May, two months before Innocent, bequeathing his care for Francis to Ugolino,

Bishop of Ostia, who became sincerely attached to his charge. Already, in 1216, he attended the Pentecostal gatherings at Santa Maria degli Angeli. The saint willingly accepted his friendship—his shrewdness somewhat at fault—for he did not at first detect beneath it Ugolino's far-sighted scheme, carried out by means of unwearied patience, subtle assault and the help of Brother Elias.

Up to this time the Whitsuntide Chapter had consisted of a joyous reunion of all the brothers for fellowship, spiritual refreshment, communion in worship, counsel taken and given, interchange of reports, receiving neophytes, and their superior's guidance both in general and particular difficulties. But from the time of Ugolino's patronage these meetings slowly but surely changed their character. M. Sabatier points out that the gradual transformation took place between the summers of 1216 and 1220, by which latter year Francis found himself enmeshed in a network of control, so skilfully woven that at first it seemed as fragile as a summer gossamer.

His struggle for independence was vain. Papal mandates could not bind him, but papal craft availed. Not for several years did he recognise the drift of Ugolino's gentle pressure; but his discovery of treachery within the camp, of discontent, of needs and demands injurious to the "new covenant," false to the espousal vows, disloyal to the Lady Poverty, began earlier and was a purgatorial agony. In the meantime Ugolino was

magnetised by his holy living, his rare spirituality, and we find in his bearing towards Francis a perplexing mixture of personal devotion and of untiring intrigue directed against the very work which God had separated him from the world to do. What Francis needed for that work was freedom ; what the Curia could not tolerate was a power outside their control. The order had become such a power, and so the fiat went forth that it must be captured and bridled and tamed.

The papal court was established for some time at Perugia, where Honorius was elected Pope on 18th July, 1216, immediately after Innocent's death. This Pontiff, less haughty than his predecessor, was eager for a new crusade, and his legates were commissioned to rekindle European fervour for the recovery of Palestine. His character was venerable for its saintliness, the simplicity of his personal habits, his dislike of pomp and display. For a time Francis saw in him the saviour of the Church. He felt sure of consideration and support for his ideal from Honorius.

He had a new inspiration for the salvation of souls, which required papal sanction. Santa Maria degli Angeli was very dear to his heart ; its walls—repaired by his own hands—were sacred as the walls of Sion. God's purposes took shape within them. Prayer there was never in vain. The presence of the Most High filled the tiny temple, and when the brothers knelt there they felt the pressure of His hand upon their brows. Might it not become a

mercy-seat, whence pardon would flow to the penitent? Might sinners not pass from its doors, sealed with Divine forgiveness, and so set free to walk in the way of life? He took Brother Leo with him to Perugia and sought an audience of the new Pope.

A week of devotion in remembrance of the consecration of Santa Maria degli Angeli was at hand. He asked Honorius to grant a pardon to all its worshippers during that week till the end of time. As Vicar of Christ he must know Christ's mind upon the matter. But Popes were not used to bestowing spiritual gifts without money and without price, and even Honorius was startled. Then, as the absolute selflessness of Francis dawned on him, he was moved by a like holy love to grant the boon required, although at the complaining of the cardinals—who were indignant at such reckless waste—he limited its action to one day out of the seven. When, radiant with joy, the saint turned to go, Honorius cried: "Oh, simple one, whither dost thou hasten without the charter of thy indulgence?"

"If it is God's giving," said Francis, "He will make it manifest. I need no testimonial. Let the Blessed Virgin Mary be the charter, Christ the notary and angels the witnesses."

At the Whitsuntide Chapter of 1217 so great a crowd of friars assembled that huts of reeds and canes were raised, roofed with branches and carpeted with mats of woven rushes, for their accommodation.

We infer that these representatives came from new communities of the Brothers Minor, but there

is yet no allusion to any except the original settlement. We know nothing of what occupied Francis from the summer of 1216 to that of 1217, although we may suppose that the astonishing increase in his following made it necessary for him to send out bodies of friars under trusted directors to such provinces as the March, Tuscany and Ascoli.

But all who know Umbria can form some idea of the great gathering on the plain; of colonies of green shelters; of the strangers present, drawn by the extraordinary success of the movement; of the crowds of villagers from Bastia, Bevagna and Cannara, bringing bread and vegetables, oil and wine, eggs and poultry, fruit and fodder; of townspeople from Spello, Foligno, Perugia, all in festal dress, seeking the shrine which Francis and his companions had made so sacred. And from Perugia, too, rode daily Bishop Ugolino, the friars going out in procession to meet him a little way from the church, when he dismounted and walked at their head to Santa Maria degli Angeli, celebrating high mass there and preaching, while Francis chanted the gospel for the day as his deacon. The bishop was deeply impressed by the scene; he saw the brothers still moved by willing obedience to their Rule, passing to and fro amongst the people, healing their sick, listening to their perplexities and confessions, ministering to the lepers near at hand, ever joyous, accessible, humble. "Truly," he said, "these are the camps of God." A vast scheme of foreign missions was proposed. Friars were sent

to Spain, to Germany, to Hungary and to Syria. Each party was placed under wise guidance, but apparently Francis lost sight of the language difficulty. For in Spain and France men spoke Provençal, or some tongue akin to it, and he ignored the backward civilisation of Germany and his brothers' ignorance of its uncouth dialects.

Brother Elias comes to the front in these preparations. He had shown great ability in his conduct of some business at Florence, and Francis gave him charge of a special mission to the Holy Land. The remembrance of his own failures weighed on his mind and checked his going. In great humility he decided to choose for himself a country nearer home. France attracted him, because he was already familiar with its southern provinces and could use its language fluently. He selected some of his followers to accompany him, particularly Brother Pacifico and his minstrels. They prepared in solitude and prayer, probably retiring to the caves and shrines of the Carceri, for his words at starting breathe the very spirit of retreat. "Go, two by two," he said, "humble and gentle, keeping silence until the third hour, praying to God in your hearts, speaking no idle word. Be as withdrawn during this journey as if you were shut up in a hermitage, or in your cell, for wherever we are and go, we bear our cell along with us: brother body is our cell and the soul is its hermit praying to the Lord and meditating within it."

But when they reached Florence, Ugolino, now

a cardinal and the Pope's legate in Tuscany, refused to allow him to leave Italy on the ground of difficulties at the papal court concerning his order. In vain did Francis remonstrate with the cardinal, arguing with sacred passion that not for Italy alone were the friars called of God, but for all nations, whether Christian or infidel. Ugolino was firm, and convinced that he was bidden from above to renounce this dear project, the saint gave way and mournfully returned to the plain, there to await the issue.

His companions were sent to France, Brother Pacifico at their head, because his gifts of music and poetic improvisation fitted him for a land familiar with wandering troubadours, whose love-lays might be replaced with the joyful chant of salvation. "The Minstrels of God" would not fail of a hearing in France.

When the various missionary parties returned some had doleful failures to report. In Germany and Hungary they were roughly treated, and their language of gesture and kind deeds did not suffice to explain their aim. In deep depression they returned to the Umbrian plain. Those sent to Spain fared somewhat better, for, although taken for heretics by the Spaniards, the Queen of Portugal received them kindly and allowed them to form settlements at Lisbon, Coïmbra and elsewhere.

Pacifico and his companions succeeded best of all. They passed up from Southern France to Paris and settled at St. Denis, where so great was the

attraction of their minstrelsy, their preaching and their lives, that many gathered round them, and they were able to send home an encouraging report. This success led Francis to appoint Pacifico director of the order in France, and four years later to send one of his fellow-workers, Agnello di Pisa, as head of a mission to England.

During that winter, probably early in 1218, Francis was in Rome and preached before Pope Honorius. At Cardinal Ugolino's suggestion, he had for once carefully prepared his sermon, but forgot it wholly in presence of his congregation, so, with a cry to God for inspiration, he spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, and both Pope and cardinals were melted to tears. Cardinal Ugolino saw much of him, and was doubtless the cause of his visit to the capital, for the Curia was occupied with the question of the new orders, and the Franciscan Missions, commissioned to preach the gospel and not the crusade, made its members uneasy.

Dominic, too, was in Rome, favoured by Honorius, since his order was bridled by monastic Rule, although appointed to go into all countries to proclaim the doctrines of the Church. But in 1218 the Dominicans were not a power in Europe as the Franciscans had become. Ugolino pressed upon Dominic the influence of poverty and self-denial, and may have suggested his combining with Francis, so as to modify the evangelistic fervour of the Brothers Minor, and to induce them to adopt the

FRANCIS PREACHING BEFORE POPE HONORIUS III

From Giotto's fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi

Rule of St. Augustine. This union Dominic proposed to Francis, who gently refused it, aware of what it involved. None the less, the two orders were destined to interpenetrate and influence each other, although not until Francis lost his power over the Brothers Minor. But the founders loved each other and edified each other, and Dominic promised to be present at the Chapter of 1218.

It may have been in the spring of this year that Francis went to Subiaco and spent some days or even weeks in the monastery built over the cavern where Benedict first found refuge from the world. He had a friend there, Brother Oddo, a man acquainted with Santa Maria degli Angeli, who perhaps once lived in the monastery on Monte Subasio.

The chapel of San Gregorio was added to the Middle Church of the Holy Cave by Cardinal Ugolino when he became Pope Gregory IX., and Brother Oddo, who was an artist, contributed a portrait of St. Francis to its decoration, which was the work of Benedictine monks. Different dates have been assigned for this portrait, but although we are led to infer that the chapel was not begun till 1227, a year after his death, the fact that Francis is represented with neither stigmata nor halo indicates that Oddo must have painted it from a portrait taken before 1224, and leads us to regard this as his only authentic likeness. He is called "Brother Francis," not St. Francis, in the inscription.

It is low on the wall to our right as we enter

the chapel. It is not more than thirty inches in length, and shows him thin and fragile, clad in the grey gown of his order, with its hood drawn over his head, and a cord, whose ends are knotted seven times, round his waist. His eyes are full of power, and suggest a year prior to his blindness. His right hand lies on his breast, his left arm hangs down, the hand holding a scroll on which are the words *"Pax huic Domui"*. A tiny figure kneels at his feet, that of the aged monk who painted him, and who, with Brother Romanus, executed most of the frescoes on the chapel walls. Their names are on an arch behind the present altar-piece, and Frater Oddo has added to his the words: *"Dies Mei Transierunt"*. So that he was an old man when he bequeathed to us this priceless portrait.

There are traces of an itinerary still further south in the spring of 1218, and of visits to the valley of Rieti, to Siena and to Bologna. He and his companion spent Lent at Monte Alverna.

The Chapter of Whitsuntide, 1218, was even more important than that of the previous summer. It was crowded with representatives from all Italy, from France, from far Portugal and Syria. The news from Palestine was most cheering. Brother Elias and his colleagues were well received by the Mussulmans, who recognised their methods and would deem their poverty sacred. An important recruit had been gained in the person of Cæsar of Speyer, who three years afterwards conducted a mission to South Germany with amazing success.

His friendship for Elias at this time is a proof of the latter's fidelity to the Rule, as later he bitterly opposed him for revolutionising the order. But we can read between the lines how Elias' temporary absence from Francis and comparative independence widened the little inevitable rift between their ideals.

Cardinal Ugolino and Dominic were present at this Chapter and some five thousand Brothers Minor and members of the Third Order. Ugolino was anxious that Dominic should apprehend the secret of this success, and he hoped to convince Francis that the learning and research essential to the Dominicans would be of use to the Franciscans. Amongst the latter were some students, who regretted the loss of their books, and who complained that they were compelled to forego the possession of even a psalter or a copy of the Scriptures. For their superior "sorrowed to see the knowledge that puffeth up sought after to the neglect of godliness," and said: "Many brethren there be that set all their study and all their care upon acquiring knowledge, letting go their holy calling by wandering forth in mind and body beyond the way of humility and holy prayer; who, when they have preached to the people, and have learnt that some have thereby been edified and converted to repentance, are incontinent, puffed up, and extol themselves upon their work and the gain of another, as if it had been their own gain; when nevertheless they have preached rather to their own condemnation and harm, and have done nothing for themselves accord-

ing to the truth, save only as the instruments of them through whom in truth the Lord has gathered in this harvest, for them that they believe to be edified and converted to repentance by their knowledge and preaching, the Lord doth in truth edify and convert by the prayers of the holy, poor, humble and simple brethren, albeit the holy brethren for the most part know not aught thereof, for thus is it the will of God they should not know, lest haply they might pride themselves thereon."

Ugolino sympathised with the murmurs rather than with these masterly arguments, cogent to-day as they were then. He went to Francis, hoping to make it clear to him that such an institution as the Brothers Minor could not be worked on so self-denying an ordinance as the gospel Rule. "Surely," he urged, "your wisest and best educated followers should have some share in your counsels — should be consulted and give you the help of their larger knowledge. Would it not be well, indeed, to profit by the experience of the ancient orders?"

Francis was only too well acquainted with the plea as with its source. He seized the cardinal's hand and led him before the assembly. "My brothers," he cried, in a voice vibrating with emotion, "God called me into the way of simplicity and humility. In that path He has revealed the truth for me and for those who wished to follow me; do not speak to me of the Rule of St. Benedict, of St. Augustine, of St. Bernard, nor

of any other saint, but of that only which God in His mercy willed to show me, and through which He told me that He would make a new covenant with the world, and through no other. God will confound you through your knowledge and your wisdom. I have faith that God will chasten you, and that, whether you will or no, you will be driven to understand."

Dominic was amazed at the spectacle of this assembly, and more and more impressed by the sanctity and power of Francis. His trust in providence when the question of food for such a multitude arose, and its response when peasants and townsfolk arrived with ample supplies; the colony of green huts, which gave to this meeting the name of "Chapter of the Mats"—a name suitable to every Pentecostal gathering of those years; the cheerfulness and holiness of the brothers, for at this time the grumblers were but a small faction; the missionary reports from distant lands, amongst them his own Spain—all told of the power latent in this new covenant to save mankind. He decided to make use of the precedent established by Francis. The force of poverty adopted by the heralds of God was an endorsement of Christ's missionary methods. These had fallen into disuse, if not disrepute, but here they were triumphantly vindicated.

He embraced St. Francis with tears in his eyes, acknowledged that clad in poverty the servants of God were best equipped, and two years later he adopted the vow of poverty for his own order.

CHAPTER VI

YEARS OF TROUBLE

1218—1223

Chapter of 1218—Francis in Egypt and Palestine—Changes made during his Absence—His Return—At Bologna—Ugolino's Management—Michaelmas Chapter of 1220—The New Rule—Pietro de Cattani appointed General—Francis and Dominic in Rome—Rule for the Third Order—Elias appointed Minister-General—The Revolution of the Order—The Rule of 1223.

FRANCIS yielded to Cardinal Ugolino's counsel on one point at the Chapter of 1218.

The brothers, rejected in Germany and Hungary, made their pitiful report. Ugolino overbore the saint's resistance and forced him to accept the protection of a pontifical brief for his missionary friars. It was issued in the following year, and is dated from Rieti, the 11th of June, 1219. This month was the trysting time of Frederick II.'s crusade, joined by volunteers from all Christian countries. The embarkation was fixed for St. John's Day, 24th June, at Ancona.

Francis, encouraged by news from Brother Elias, found this an opportune moment for joining him in Syria, and this time no objection was interposed.

He had sent Brother Egidio to Tunis, Brother Christopher to Gascony and a third mission to Spain and Morocco. The first and third proved unsuccessful, Egidio and his companions being driven from the country and forced to recross the Mediterranean, while five members of the band sent to Morocco were martyred in the year following. The second mission prospered, and for fifty years Brother Christopher lived and laboured according to the gospel Rule in Gascony.

It was not for Francis to shirk the dangers which his brothers faced, and he set out for Ancona with a large following. There it was impossible to find passage room for so many. Francis called to his side a child playing near and bade him choose eleven of the friars to form the mission. These he accepted, the rest returned to the Portiuncula. Embarking for St. Jean d'Acre, they touched at Cyprus on the way. There Brother Barbaro spoke "idle words" of calumny against another in the presence of a Cypriote gentleman. Francis inflicted upon him the penance of eating dung, while he repeated: "It is fitting that a mouth, which has distilled the venom of hatred against my brother, should eat this excrement."

They reached St. Jean d'Acre, where Elias was settled, about the middle of July. Francis divided his company into two parts, left one of them to reinforce Elias and to preach the gospel in Syria, and started with the other for Egypt, whither the crusaders had gone to besiege Damietta.

Here he found French, English and Germans, as well as Italians. Jacques de Vitry, present at the siege, tells us of the impression which he made: "He is so lovable that all venerate him." But he was powerless to prevent the rabble army from attacking the Saracens in open battle, when it was routed and humiliated as he had predicted, for his experienced eye detected its want of discipline. He was well known, too, amongst the Saracens capable of understanding the saintliness of the "little poor one".

The Sultan of Egypt was Alkhamil, a man of open mind and noble nature. Francis sought his presence and told him of Christ, calling upon him to test the heralds of God, Pietro de Cattani and himself, who were willing to pass through flames if his soothsayers and priests would do the same. But these slunk away. Francis expounded the gospel to Alkhamil, who asked him to pray that God would, by a sign, reveal whether Mahomet or Christ were the true prophet. He is said to have accepted the saint's message, and to have received the last offices from two friars when he died a few years later. In the meantime, he gave Francis and his companions a safe-conduct, and commended them to his brother Almuazzam, the Sultan of Syria. Damietta was taken by the crusaders, and a hideous carnage ensued, dishonouring to their standard.

Francis left a scene where men's greed and cruelty hindered his work, and went to Palestine. We may surmise that he reached Bethlehem in time for

FRANCIS BEFORE THE SULTAN OF EGYPT

From Giotto's fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi

Christmas Eve, and that there his spirit, rapt in visions of the Babe, recovered its joy and peace.

But we have only fragmentary and perhaps legendary record of his seven months' stay in Palestine. Absent from the Portiuncula for a whole year, he knew nothing of what was happening there. His arrangements for a lengthened separation had been most careful, but it is probable that he hoped to return for the Whitsuntide Chapter of 1220, and was delayed by illness. There is a passing record of such a hindrance, probably some form of eye disease, such as ophthalmia. We may be sure that those afflicted with such troubles, as well as lepers, would be his special care, and that contact would expose him to attack, while shelterless noons and nights would leave him a prey to the poisonous flies whose swarms plague both Egypt and Syria.

The Chapter was held without him, and revealed a series of startling innovations and grave disorders.

Pope Honorius, resident at Rieti when Francis left, was in 1220 at Viterbo. Cardinal Ugolino remained in Perugia, paying occasional visits to Bologna, the headquarters of the Dominicans in Italy. He was still occupied with the affairs of both orders. The founder of the latter had proved to be most manageable; the founder of the former was in the East by his own passionate desire and unhindered by Ugolino. A nephew of the cardinal's had joined Francis some time earlier, although we are ignorant of the exact date of his

adhesion. Brother Gregory of Naples he was called, and his capacity as a missionary director had led Francis to appoint him itinerary superintendent during his absence. His duties were to go from centre to centre of the work in Italy to guide, encourage and console. Brother Matthew of Narni was made resident director at the same time—to remain at the Portiuncula, receive new adherents and carry on the local activities.

Just a month after Francis left for Syria, Ugolino imposed the Benedictine Rule upon the Poor Sisters at Florence, Siena, Perugia and Lucca. With Clare at San Damiano he had no chance. From the first he was much impressed with Clare's rare strength of character and sanctity, and something almost approaching to a friendship existed between them. He visited San Damiano frequently, and must have sought to convince her of the need of conventualism, but Clare gently repelled all such suggestions and maintained the sufficiency of the gospel Rule. There is little doubt that in the other communities his counsels met with greater appreciation, for we are told that it was at the instance of the sisters, through Brother Filippo Longo, appointed to serve them, that the Benedictine Rule was imposed.

Then, through Brother Gregory of Naples, an innovation was effected in the Rule of the Brothers Minor. He and Brother Matthew added Monday to the weekly fasts, and made new ordinances with regard to the character of what they might eat on other days. An attempt, too, was made to bring

the government into accord with the old monasticism rather than with the "New Covenant".

When these changes were brought before the Chapter of 17th May, 1220, the first companions of St. Francis, who best understood their superior's ideal, were indignant. Unfortunately, Gregory of Naples, while discharging his functions, had been able to influence many of the friars. But those faithful to Francis, and uneasy at his protracted absence—which had given ground for a rumour of his death—sent one of their number to the East to seek him out and to entreat his return. This brother found him so quickly that it is probable he was about to embark for Italy at St. Jean d'Acre. On hearing of his vicar's interference with the Rule, and of disorders initiated by one of the friars—who collected a body of lepers, both men and women, and asked for papal authority to unite them under a separate Rule—he was deeply distressed. He was aware of rebellious elements within the brotherhood, but he had trusted his vicars, and to them were due these revolutionary steps, taken under the ægis of Pope and cardinal, who were careful to keep their share in the changes passive and unexpressed.

Francis took Pietro de Cattani, Brother Elias, Cæsar of Speyer (Spires) and others with him on the homeward journey. They were landed at Venice, whence they set out for Bologna, passing by Padua, Brescia and Mantua. He sent a messenger to Clare with a letter, of which only a few lines have been recovered:—

"I, little Brother Francis, wish to follow the life and the poverty of Jesus Christ, our exalted Saviour, and of His holy mother, and to persevere therein until the end; and I entreat and exhort you all to persevere always in this holy life and poverty. And beware never to swerve from it, whoever may counsel or teach you to that effect."

As he neared Bologna he was told that the provincial minister, Pietro Stacia, had placed his friars in a house built for them, and had organised a college for the pursuit of learning amongst them. The house was known as belonging to the Brothers Minor. This was opposed to the fundamental principle of his order, which forbade all property, and, as we have seen in the case of Rivo Torto, demanded immediate cession of even a ruin to whoever claimed it. His displeasure was so vehement that he cursed Brother Pietro Stacia, refusing to revoke the curse when implored to do so. He ordered the friars in residence to leave at once, taking with them the sick persons whom they were nursing. It is significant that they went to Cardinal Ugolino, and that he was at pains to explain to Francis his personal proprietorship of the building, which he permitted the friars to use. He, too, was in Bologna, and they met daily. Francis allowed himself to be over-ruled, but with what agony he must have realised that the external success of his order was to be its inward failure, that Christ was to be betrayed afresh in the house of His friends.

He was none the less willing to preach and to call men to repentance, and, although the development of his work was gone beyond him, he was still beloved of all Italy, and the people crowded to hear him on Assumption Day, when he addressed them on the Piazza del Piccolo-Palazzo. An archdeacon of Bologna cathedral has left a vivid account of the occasion. He tells us that Francis spoke on "angels, men and demons"; that his garments were poor, his appearance was insignificant, his face without beauty; but that God gave such power to his words, which were not those of a pulpit orator, but of one speaking heart to heart, that wise men and nobles were filled with admiration, and that blood-feuds in the city came to an end because of his pleading for peace. The portrait is like that of his Master, in whom there was no beauty that men should desire Him, but such a power that they pressed to listen to Him.

After a few days Ugolino took him to the hermitage of San Romualdo, at Camaldoli, in the Casentino—deep in forest shades, and a short distance from Monte Alverna.

Francis was in sore need of retreat, and Ugolino, loving the man, but determined to vanquish his prepossession for such an inconvenient Rule as Christ's, found the opportunity of passing St. Michael's Lent together favourable to his purpose.

The tenor of the saint's preoccupation after quitting Palestine is demonstrated by his pathetic dream of the little black hen, whose chickens were so

numerous that her wings could no longer shelter them. And, indeed, his case was like his Master's, who would fain have gathered His chickens together "as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings," but they would not. For to this it had come, that many of the friars would not.

Humble and self-distrustful, in ill-health and prostrated in spirit by disappointment, he was in just the case favourable to Ugolino's skilful treatment. Francis loved the cardinal and leant upon his hardened wisdom, feeling it to be a relief from his own sensitiveness to successive impressions. Nor can we doubt that his affection was amply returned, and that Ugolino reverenced his saintliness and acknowledged his spiritual power. He must have convinced Francis of the peculiar virtue of authority at such crises, for by the middle of September his point was gained. A month of affectionate companionship and superlative tact, of pressure to the point—with perhaps tender reproof that he forbore to accept the whole will of God—ended in victory for the cardinal. He did not venture to ask for more than one concession, but that sufficed.

Francis, realising his own inadequacy, accepted him as protector of the order and went to Orvieto to ask and to receive the Pope's sanction for this appointment. Ugolino's negotiations had been conducted with the far-sighted and patient policy of a great statesman. He granted to Francis the redress of every immediate grievance, released the Sisters from St. Benedict's Rule, discouraged the Leper

Order, and enjoined upon him the drawing up of a new Rule to include a novitiate of one year for all candidates, a precaution whose need was endorsed by the recent disorders. A Bull on this point was issued, to be read at the Michaelmas Chapter of 1220, the first of a long series which controlled the future concerns of the order, and the death-knell of its independence. Francis was no longer able to inspire his friars with his own mind, and there was nothing for their subjection to discipline except authority. While he ruled in their hearts Christ ruled over their lives; when they rebelled against him they followed their own caprices and became a hindrance rather than an example, more dangerous than the heretics of Lombardy and Viterbo.

The Chapter took place on 29th September, and during its sittings Francis began to prepare his new Rule. He was obliged to admit to his counsels the ministers of the order. Reduced to deep depression by all that had happened, prone to blame himself for the defects of others, he lacked the certainty of God's election and revelation, which had given such impetus to his first steps. The net was closing round him. His interpretation of God's will was no longer deemed final, and his humility undermined his assurance. He held deliberate conferences with the ministers, and a Rule was decided upon, which, while maintaining some of the original principles, mitigated the vow of poverty, that vow which was the mainspring of the first institution. For, as poverty had "run to meet our Lord at His nativity,"

had laid Him in a manger, had gone with Him along the dusty roads of Galilee, had provided for Him the desert place for dwelling, the wayside for rest, the hours of toil, the scanty meal, the dungeon and the cross—so she had saved Him from betraying the will of His Father, had kept Him wholly God-like, a pattern to all who live for the salvation of the world. Against this helpmeet of Christ the blow was levelled when Francis was forced to omit from the new Rule the passage from St. Luke which prescribed garb, bearing and forbearing necessary for those who were sent forth as lambs amongst wolves. "Woe unto those brethren," he cried, "that set themselves against me in this matter, which I know of a certainty to be of the will of God for the greater usefulness and need of the whole religion, albeit I unwillingly condescend unto their will." "Herein is my grief and my affliction, that in these things which, with much travail of prayer and meditation, I obtain of God through His mercy for the welfare present and future of the whole religion, and am by Himself certified that they be in accordance with His will, yet certain of the brethren on the authority of their own knowledge and false forethought, do go against me and make them void, saying: 'Such and such things are to be kept and observed and such others not.'"

But he cried in vain. He resolved to resign his office of superior, using his waning influence to appoint Pietro de Cattani in his stead. Before the

autumn Chapter of 1220 ended, he presented Brother Pietro to the assembly, saying: "Henceforward am I dead unto you, but see here Pietro de Cattani unto whom I and all you will be obedient." Then he knelt on the ground and promised his own obedience, while the friars who loved him wept sore. "Lord," he prayed aloud, "unto Thee do I commend the family that hitherto Thou hast committed unto me. And now, O Lord most sweet, on account of those infirmities whereof Thou wottest, being unable to have the care thereof, I do commend the same unto the ministers, the which in the day of judgment shall be held answerable before Thee, O Lord, in case any brother shall perish through their negligence or evil ensample, or too harsh correction." The great renunciation was made; he had yielded up the care of his flock; henceforth he went alone by rocky paths and desert places to his home in the heart of God, ascribing to the maladies which beset him this new stern providence for himself, but understanding well that his own friars thwarted his ideal for the order. "For some there be among the number of the superiors, that do draw them aside to other things, setting before them the example of the elders, and holding my advice as of little account, but that which they themselves do, and how they do it, will be made clearer in the end."

Nothing was more contrary to his "new covenant" than the gradual systematising of the order into monasticism. He sought to bridge

over the gulf between the religious and secular classes, strained apart by the Church, and to apply Christ's rule of living as the true rule of living for all men alike, promising results for the world which it had not hitherto attained.

But with Ugolino's friendship came the "rift within the lute," and its harmonies were dying in discord. The appointment of provincial ministers, and of vicars to act in his absence, was the first step taken in the new direction, and this seems to belong to 1218 and 1219. Their vicarious authority became a conspiracy against his administrative influence, although they kept up an appearance of reverence for his office, even to the extent of calling Pietro de Cattani vicar rather than minister-general. This was a concession to the popular veneration for the dear Umbrian saint.

Francis chose Brother Cæsar of Speyer (Spires) to assist him in drawing up the new Rule, whose chief clauses were defined at Michaelmas. A student of the Scriptures and a devoted friend, his collaboration must have partially comforted Francis. Their work was completed by Christmas. It occupied ten folio pages, of which one sufficed for the Rule itself, whilst the others were filled with passionate appeals to the friars to keep the gospel way, and with prayers of adoration to the Holy Trinity, to the Blessed Mother of our Lord, to the archangels and choirs of cherubim and seraphim, to saints and apostles. One passage implored all who belonged to the Catholic and Apostolic Church, not alone its

ecclesiastics and their following, but all who worshipped within its temples—babes and children, the poor and exiled, kings, princes and working men, servants and masters, old and young, people of every tribe and of every nation—to persevere in the true faith and in penitence along with the Brothers Minor—unprofitable servants—for outside of faith and penitence no one could be saved. And then, again and again he recalled the friars to that living within the love of God which is as essential to the spiritual as is air to the bodily health ; to the lifting up of humble hearts in praise of the most high, sovereign and eternal God, who alone can purify and empower their faculties. The poignant note of grief, uncertainty, anxiety rings in these anguished repetitions.

Francis took this document to Rome early in 1221, but before presenting it to Honorius III. he submitted it to Cardinal Ugolino for criticism and correction. As M. Sabatier suggests, it must have been at this time that he constrained himself to unresisting obedience. " Take a lifeless body and set it where you please. Ye will see that it resenteth not being moved, nor changeth its position, nor crieth out when it is let go. If that it be set upon a throne, it looketh not toward the highest but the lowest. If it be clad in purple, then is it doubly wan. This is the truly obedient, that asketh no question wherefore he should be moved, careth not where he is placed, urgeth not that he should be changed elsewhere. Promoted to office, he

holdeth his wonted humility ; and the more he is honoured the more he thinketh him unworthy."

Perhaps a touch of hysterical irony lurks in this simile, but it was in the spirit of this obedience that he submitted to Cardinal Ugolino's judgment.

The discoveries of M. Sabatier and of Padre Berardelli give us a Rule, drawn up at the same time, for the Third Order of Penitents. Twelve chapters or paragraphs comprise what belongs to 1221, for the thirteenth, subjoined to the copy found in 1901 by M. Sabatier in the convent of San Giovanni of Capestrano, in the Province of Aquila, was added in 1228, and was the first of a series of changes. These twelve paragraphs concern clothing, abstinence, fasting, prayer, confession, communion, prohibition to carry arms and use oaths, works of mercy, masses for departed members, the making of wills, the treatment of heretics and the punishment of wrongdoing. The clauses are short and incisive, and contain nothing of the essential quality of the saint's compositions. Doubtless this memorial for the Third Order of Penitents may be referred to the cardinal. These had increased to so great a number throughout Italy that their organisation would commend itself to him, and his action was hastened by numerous indiscretions due to their lack of supervision. We have seen how they meant for Francis and his first companions the coming of God's kingdom throughout the world. His preaching and influence attracted the first: home missions added to their number. They lived

in their homes, the best of them simply obedient to Christ's teaching. But want of direction was soon manifest amongst them. This Rule places them under four authorities, or ministers—the visitor, the spiritual adviser, the director, and finally the bishop in whose diocese they dwelt. The visitor's functions were judicial; he reproved, corrected and punished disorders. Throughout the thirteenth century this Third Order gave the Franciscan generals considerable trouble, and the Rule of 1221 was altered and enlarged in 1228, 1234 and 1289.

Cardinal Ugolino, the most influential member of the college, friend for the moment of Frederick II., powerful with Honorius III., was still much occupied with the development of the Mendicant Orders. He considered them complimentary to each other, and wished to effect not only a close alliance between them, but to invest them with authority, and to strengthen the hierarchy from their ranks. His imagination pictured them so firmly welded to the Church that they would form a strong bulwark for her power throughout the world.

Dominic was in Rome at this time and met Francis frequently in the cardinal's palace. Ugolino suggested to both his project of choosing bishops from their friars, but failed to win their approval. "I would rather that my friars remain as they are," said Dominic, and Francis refused honour for his on the ground that *minores* could not become *majores*. "If you would that they bring forth fruit in the Church of God let them stay

where God has called them. Let not their poverty become an occasion of pride, and rather thrust them down than allow them to climb on high."

They parted on the day when Dominic left for Bologna—to die a few months later—and as they bade each other farewell Dominic begged for the cord which girded Francis and wore it under his habit to the end. "Of a truth," he said to his followers, "all the religious ought to imitate this holy man Francis, so absolute is the perfection of his holiness."

Pietro de Cattani's death on the 10th of March recalled Francis to the Portiuncula, when he chose Brother Elias to be minister-general. This act marks emphatically his subjection to the papal policy. Cæsar of Speyer (Spires) was out of the way, despatched to Southern Germany on mission work shortly before Pietro's death. The Curia could not have succeeded so well with him as with Brother Elias, whose character the astute cardinal readily gauged. Ugolino doubtless desired Francis to make the appointment, because it owed nothing to the suffrages of the friars assembled three months later at the Whitsuntide Chapter. Beyond an occasional convulsion of opposition or bitter cry of disappointment, Francis made little effort to stem the backward movement. He seems to have devoted himself to the cultivation of personal humility, no longer exclusively towards God, but also towards Ugolino and the ministers of the order, whose interposition between himself and the friars destroyed

their erewhile relations of father and children, and thwarted the gentle influence with which he had once swayed their minds and their conduct. It may have been suggested to him that he was to blame for their disorders, and in the nervous crisis produced by all these disasters the suggestion had taken root and grown into a half-bewildered penitence. Certainly his aim was to offer a constant example of dumb obedience to Elias. The effort induced an odd reaction of feeling, in which his own shrewd intuitions turned and rent him. He took an aversion to Elias which he could hardly overcome and which he ascribed to a prevision of his eternal damnation. But this was merely a hysterical reason for his well-grounded distrust of the new government, now passed into the hands of the men of learning, the men who had sought out many inventions, preferring them to the simple Rule of which Christ had been sole mouthpiece.

At the Chapter of May 30th, 1221, Francis took his place humbly at Bombarone's feet. To him he handed the new Rule for proclamation. Some arrangement had been come to between Elias and Ugolino, for the Rule disappeared a few days later. Brother Elias said he had lost it; more probably he had sent it to the cardinal, who found himself unable to be present, and who would take good care to lose it, since he knew and disapproved of its contents. So Francis, with some of his earliest followers, Brothers Bernardo, Leo, Egidio, Bonizio, retired to the hermitage at Monte Colombo and

began to write out a second copy. When this was known there was consternation amongst the friars whose party was in authority. They came to Elias complaining that Francis was making a Rule too heavy to bear, and asking the minister-general to interfere and to tell the saint that they would not be bound by his Rule, so that he might make it for himself but not for them. Elias declined the embassy unless the malcontents were willing to go with him. They consented to this, and seeking Francis in his solitude, laid their objections to the gospel Rule before him. These he repelled, reminding them that Christ Himself had called them to obey this Rule, and suggesting that all those friars who refused it should leave the order. But his struggle was vain. Well did the rebels know that Elias, Ugolino, the Pope were at their back; that until the document had been modified by authority, their obedience could not be exacted; that its doom would be pronounced at the forthcoming Chapter.

Whatever precautions were taken to veil their policy from Francis and his faithful few, its furtherance was resolved, and we are almost driven to conjecture that their attitude towards him was one of scarcely concealed impatience for his death. Blow after blow fell upon the fair fabric of his plan. No longer were the brothers to be as Christ was, or as those whom Christ ordained. They were to be gathered into communities, into houses, to have privileges and possessions, to have churches of their

own, to be under strict command, to be employed as papal messengers, agents, instruments. Not for the salvation of the world were they to exist, but for the endorsement of ecclesiastical authority. The hermitages were to be abandoned; the little temporary homes of canes and branches, which served them for brief shelter on their itineraries, were to be disused. Solid structures were begun to receive them permanently. No longer were the humble and ancient sanctuaries to be their care; were they to fill churches in town and city; were they to gather peasants about them in the fields, townsfolk in the piazzas.

Fine churches began to rise wherever their companies were planted, to give them local importance, to destroy the very foundations upon which their order had been raised. For the things invisible and eternal had once more come to judgment and were decreed worthless beside the visible.

The friars were granted power to celebrate the offices and functions of the Church in times of interdict; they were employed by the Court of Rome against the regular clergy when these were defaulters.

This revolution was relentlessly carried out, while Francis was kept in partial ignorance of its development. He was reduced to fill the rôle of saint without authority or influence. It was a tragic rôle, for the shortcomings of his children recoiled upon him as if they were his own, and he lamented them in anguish, which preyed upon him.

It was not till 1223 that the new Rule was promulgated, and its clauses betray the setting aside of what he held to be essential. Even what of his was retained is modified into futility, given as a counsel of perfection, and then carefully disallowed. Thus, his gospel precedent regarding friars convicted of sin, either mortal or venial, is disregarded, and elaborate instructions take its place, giving judicial functions to the provincial minister through a priest of the order.

Then the minister-general is endowed with ultimate administrative power. The Chapters are no longer to be held biennially at Pentecost and Michaelmas. Their assembling depends on the good pleasure of the general. His government is to be without reference to the Chapter, which is to be convoked for administrative purposes only when the general is inefficient. There is no doubt that Ugolino and Elias framed this important clause without reference to Francis, and that the complete revolution of the order was effected by virtue of its action. It stopped the mouths of all who were loyal to the original purpose and organisation. Some of these reproached Francis for doing nothing to hinder this destruction of the old ideal, and his answer indicates the advantage taken by cardinal and minister-general of his enfeebled state. "For so long as I held the office of superior over the brethren and they did abide in their vocation and profession, albeit that from the beginning of my conversion I have ever been ailing, yet with such

small solicitude, as I could, did I endeavour to satisfy them both by ensample and by preaching; but, after that, I perceived how the Lord did multiply the number of the brethren, and how they themselves, by reason of their lukewarmness and want of spirit, did begin to decline from the right way and safe wherein they had been wont to walk, and treading the broader way that leadeth unto death, would no longer pay heed unto their calling and profession, nor to any good ensample, and were not minded to forsake the perilous and deadly journey they had emprised, by reason of any preaching or admonition or ensample of mine that I did ever manifest before them, I did, therefore, resign the superiorship and the government of the religion unto God and unto the ministers thereof. Whence, albeit that at the time when I did renounce mine office of superior over the brethren, I did excuse me before the brethren in the Chapter General for that, by reason of mine infirmities, I was not able to undertake the charge of them; yet, natheless, were the brethren willing to walk according to my will; for their comfort and utility I would that they should have none other minister but me until my dying day. From the time that a good and faithful subject knoweth and observeth the will of his superior, little solicitude need the superior have about him; yea, so greatly should I rejoice in the goodness of the brethren, by reason of the gain unto them and the gain unto myself, that if I were lying abed sick it would be no

trouble unto me to satisfy them; for that mine office—that is the office of superior—is spiritual only, to wit, to have the mastery over their evil ways, and spiritually to correct and amend them. But, seeing that I cannot correct and amend them by preaching, admonition and example, I am not minded to become an executioner to punish and scourge them like the magistrates of this world. For I trust in the Lord that the invisible enemies that are the sergeants of the Lord, for punishing the guilty in this world and in the world to come, will get like vengeance on them that transgress the commandments of God and the vow of their profession, . . . that so they may be turned back unto their own calling and profession."

PRESENTATION OF THE RULE OF 1223 TO POPE HONORIUS III

From Ghirlandaio's fresco in the Church of Santa Trinita, Florence

CHAPTER VII

LAST YEARS

1223—1226

The Rule of 1223—The Præsepio of Greccio—The Friars in England—Monte Alverna—The Stigmata—Farewell to Monte Alverna—*Canticle of the Sun*—Rieti—Siena—Bagnara—Assisi—Bishop and Magnates at Variance—Francis makes Peace.

THE Rule was finally passed by Cardinal Ugolino and the ministers at the Michaelmas Chapter of 1223. Francis took it to Monte Colombo, and remained at the hermitage there in prayer and fasting, before he went to Rome, where he was the cardinal's guest. On November 25th, he was received at the Lateran, and Honorius, after personally modifying one of its clauses, bestowed upon the Rule his seal and sanction.

It was during this visit that he one day shocked his host by arriving rather late for dinner, with a collection of crusts which he had begged, and which he distributed to all at table, explaining afterwards that for him and his true sons the table of the Lord far outweighed the richest banquet.

Some strain of nervous excitability is obvious in another incident, which recounts his painful experiences in a tower near the palace of Cardinal Leo, who had persuaded him to spend a few days as his guest. He was either attacked by thieves or suffered from a nightmare, in which he believed himself to be beaten by demons on account of his selfish disregard of the privations of the brethren, to punish which God had sent these His sergeants for his correction. So next morning he bade the cardinal farewell, and returned to Monte Colombo, his solitude near Rieti.

The time approached Christmas Eve. Hallowed memories of Bethlehem crowded upon him and dispelled the strange terrors of an over-wrought imagination, which had invaded even this peaceful hermitage—making him their prey one midnight because the brothers insisted on his using a feather pillow, for which his conscience reproached him. In the neighbourhood lived a friend, John of Greccio. Francis went to him and asked him to help in carrying out an inspiration for the festival. The good man provided a manger filled with hay, an ox and an ass. From all the neighbouring monasteries monks were bidden to come to the hermitage, and the pathways up Monte Colombo rang with their footsteps and chanting. As the winter afternoon darkened, peasants, torch in hand, hastened through the forest, laden with candles for the præsepio. The cells were filled with light. In the larger was placed the manger, the ox and ass

were led to its side, and a babe was laid in it by Francis himself; it turned in his arms and gazed upon him smiling. He trembled with joy, while tears of sorrow for the Babe of Bethlehem, laid long ago by the Lady Poverty upon hay in a manger, fell from his eyes. As midnight passed the brothers joined in matins; mass was sung, and Francis read the gospel of Good Tidings and preached upon the "Child of Bethlehem". It seemed to all that they were in Bethlehem, that time and space were vanquished as they listened—and they adored the God who so loved the world that He spared not His Son.

Joy returned to the desolate heart: the Babe of Bethlehem had brought him peace. M. Sabatier reminds us how this joy inspired Brother Jacopone di Todi to write a second *Stabat Mater*, one in which Mary's heart sings at the cradle of her Son.

Stood the mother full of joy
By the hay where lay her Boy,
Very fair she was to see.

And she gloried all amazed,
And exulted as she gazed,
Worshipping the Babe she bore.

Make me glad in verity,
Little Jesus, one with Thee
All my life, I Thee implore.

At Pentecost, 1224, the new Rule was put into the hands of the ministers. The copy brought back

from Rome by Francis, to which is attached the Pope's seal, is still in existence and can be seen in the sacristy of San Francesco at Assisi.

A mission was despatched to England, reaching Dover late in the autumn of that year. One of Brother Pacifico's best workers in France, Brother Agnello di Pisa, was placed at its head. Two by two the friars made for the towns—for Oxford and London first of all—and for their worst quarters, where fevers, leprosy and misery were most at home. Newgate was their choice in London, while at Oxford they built their mud and wattle huts amongst the river swamps. Rebuff and welcome they accepted with equal mind, for these men were still of true Franciscan spirit, and perhaps knew nothing of the revolt. So, at all events, we are led to believe from their ardent poverty and fidelity to the Rule. It was not until they had attracted a large body of adherents, until the first friars had passed away, that the trend towards monasticism and learning affected the order in England, and even then we find its members in fullest sympathy with the spirit of liberty, of light, of revolt against papal tyranny. And in England, as elsewhere, they quickened the current of tenderness for the wretched and diseased, which had grown stagnant in the Church as in the State.

Early in August Francis, taking Brothers Leo, Angelo, Masseo and Illuminato with him, left for Monte Alverna in the upper valley of the Arno. There was no duty now to hold him back from

those desert places, where he could commune with God. They started on foot, but two days of toilsome walking exhausted his powers, and a peasant of the plain of Arezzo pressed upon his use an ass, which he prepared to lead himself. The Arno flows there amongst vines and mulberries, and the Apennines circle round, rising three and four thousand feet, their lower slopes corn and meadow land, their mid-flanks clad with oaks and chestnuts, their summits dark with pines. As they journeyed towards the sternest of these mountain heights, the peasant asked him if he were in truth that Francis of Assisi of whom all men spoke, and, being assured, he bade him take heed to be as good as men accounted him, since it were pity that they should be deceived. And Francis, rejoiced at his homely sincerity, dismounted that he might the better thank him on his knees for so congenial a counsel.

Monte Alverna, four thousand feet in height, was ascended by a narrow path amongst bare rocks, precipitous and unclad. But on its summit grew a forest of pines, oaks and beeches, and under their shade nestled wild flowers, belated cyclamens and starry pyrolas. Amongst the trees, too, dwelt a great colony of birds, from fierce falcons frequenting the cliffs to little song-birds—merle, mavis and finch. For the Casentino is very rich in birds. As the weary company rested under an oak, a flock of songsters flew from the forest to greet St. Francis, settling on his head and shoulders and hands, bidding him welcome with shrill cries and fluttering

wings. With gladdened mien he turned to his companions, saying: "I see it seems good to our Lord that we sojourn on this lonely mountain, since our little sisters the birds meet us with such delight."

Then resuming their way, they toiled up to the summit, and found there the preparations made by Count Orlando for their stay. Caves supplied cells for the brothers, and on the sward stood a hut made and roofed of branches for Francis. But not at once did he retire to solitude. The beauty of the summer night, the balmy air, the rustle of leaves, the fragrance—all demanded a tribute of acknowledgment, for all came direct from the Creator. There were arrangements as well to be made for the two months which he proposed to spend there. A small sanctuary had been built for their daily mass and offices, and Francis called it Santa Maria degli Angioli, in memory of the beloved mother shrine at home. Times and seasons were appointed for all services. As he sat upon a rock with the faithful few around him, he talked of his death as something with which he now stood face to face, with no personal regret, but with anxiety for them, lambs amongst wolves, whose future he could not foresee. For them he was willing still to live and suffer, to spend and be spent, would that assure their safety in the narrow way. The order had gone from him, but these and some others were his "little flock," and the kingdom was given to them.

For himself, he had sought Monte Alverna for fasting and prayer, for meditation on the Passion of his Master, which he understood now as he had never done before. Christ had been forsaken by His own, as Francis was now, without even a loyal remnant to console Him in the dark hour of His need. Towards mid-September would come the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross; he meant to prepare himself for it by unremitting surrender of mind and spirit to the Crucified One and His sufferings. He bade his companions protect his solitude; do for all who came what was asked of them, but suffer no secular visitor to interrupt him as he wrestled in prayer. He gave Brother Leo instructions to bring him bread and water daily.

His leafy hut was but a stone's throw from the cells, and the brothers, hungering and thirsting for their beloved father, were too near him, watched him too closely. In a few days the Feast of the Assumption was due, and it initiated what he called St. Michael's Lent, which, ending with September, he was used to observe in strict solitude and fasting. So he sought a place of absolute seclusion. A chasm in the Penna lay between an isolated mass of rock and the cells of the brothers. It was crossed by a log of wood, and Francis found on the other side a supreme solitude, broken only by the falcon nesting there, whom his presence did not disturb, and to whose cries at dawn he trusted as a call to matins, believing when the bird wheeled upwards in silence that he forbore to waken him through pity of his

prostration—and this may well have been, since the man and all God's creatures were at one.

Here a hut was built for him, and on the Feast of the Assumption he began his fast. From time to time Brother Leo was allowed to say matins with him, and it may have been after this function that one day he won from him that written benediction still to be seen in the sacristy of San Francesco at Assisi, all soiled at the folds with long carrying in the Pecorello's tunic. In pain and blindness Francis formed the letters on a little sheet of parchment, about six inches in length and four in width. On one side he wrote a number of verses from the *Laudes Creatoris,* and on the other the beautiful benediction from the sixth chapter of Numbers, which God ordained for Aaron's use:—

Benedicat tibi Dominus et custodiat te :
Ostendat faciem suam tibi et misereatur tui :
Convertat vultum suum ad te et det tibi pacem :

Then, to make it specially the Pecorello's own, he wrote:—

Dominus benedicat te Frater Leo :

and below this special consecration he sketched a cross like a Greek Tau, the old form of the cross, and placed beside it a recumbent friar, Brother Leo, to remind him that he must lie low at the foot of the cross all the days of his life. Some lines in red ink written by Leo date this most pathetic document after the event which befel Francis on the morning of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

THE BENEDICTION OF BROTHER LEO

From the original in the Sacristy of the Upper Church at Assisi

He had spent weeks in prayer and fasting, his whole spirit absorbed with the sorrow of the Cross, well understood by one betrayed, too, by his followers to the priests. No man on earth ever realised so keenly as did Francis what the Man of Sorrows suffered before His crucifixion, and while He hung upon the tree God's gift of the marks of that final agony was but the Divine recognition of his martyrdom. They were bestowed upon him suddenly after his long vigil while he knelt before the entrance of his hut praying for union with Christ's sufferings. His face was turned towards the dawn, whose light more radiant than common shone upon him. For down its rays there sped a vision of One nailed to a cross, flying to him with wings that beat the air, while two wings covered his head and two his feet. A moment the marvel rested above him while he gazed, and then words fell from its lips, and he understood that his martyrdom was accepted, his prayer granted. When the glory faded he found upon hands and feet and side the marks of the Lord's body. From a wound on his right side oozed a few drops of blood, and through his hands and feet were fleshy growths, black in colour and piercing from side to side. They resembled nails exactly, and were not the mere wounds of modern hysterical ecstaticism.

Celestial joy accompanied and followed this great investiture, and recompensed him for all the pain that went before. He abode in that joy a fortnight longer, and on September 30th, the Festival

of Saints Michael and Jerome, left Monte Alverna for ever. The circumstances of his going are set forth in a beautiful letter written long afterwards by Brother Masseo for the edification of the order.

Masseo was more than ninety years old when he died, and he spent seventy years of his long life in humble obedience to the gospel Rule. He tells how Francis called the brothers into the oratory of Santa Maria degli Angioli early that morning, and commended the sanctuary and the mountain to their care, saying especially to Masseo: "Fra Masseo, know that it is my mind that in this place should abide those of the religious who fear God and are the best of my order: the superiors, therefore, must seek to place the best of the brothers here."

And then he sighed, remembering how few there were now of such! Then he bade Brothers Angelo, Sylvestro, Illuminato and Masseo take special care of the spot where he had fasted and prayed. These friars he left to care for Monte Alverna and its shrines, but Brother Leo went with him—Fra "Pecorello di Dio," as he tenderly called him—the man amongst them all who understood him best, who has most lovingly portrayed him with least of vain imagining, most of insight, and who alone at that time knew of the stigmata. He bade the four others farewell, each and all again and again. "Adieu to all, adieu O mountain, adieu Monte Alverna, adieu mount of angels, adieu thou dearest! Brother Falcon, I thank thee for the kindness thou didst use to me! Adieu, adieu sharp

rock, I shall not come to visit thee again! Adieu rock, adieu, adieu, adieu rock, which didst receive me into thy bowels, frustrating the cunning Evil One; we shall not see each other again! Adieu Santa Maria degli Angioli; I commend to thee my children, Mother of the Eternal Word!"

A copy of this letter, made in the sixteenth century, was kept at San Damiano until the middle of last century, when it was transferred to the monastery on Monte Alverna, where it is read aloud on every anniversary of the saint's departure. Count Orlando sent a horse for his use, and after these charges and farewells he mounted and began the long descent towards Chiusi, where he probably visited the count. Then riding by Monte Arcoppe and the Foresto he came to the summit of Monte Acuto, whence he could still see the sacred mountain, and there dismounting, he knelt to bid a last farewell to the "Mountain in which God is well pleased to dwell. Adieu, Monte Alverna, may God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit bless thee, abide in peace, for we shall see each other no more!"

All the brothers went with him as far as Monte Casale, where there was a little hermitage in which he rested several days. At this point he dismissed the four brothers, to whose care he had committed Monte Alverna, and they took back Count Orlando's horse to Chiusi. He was lost in meditation while he passed from village to village, and did not know that he was making a triumphal progress, marked by miracles.

At Citta di Castello he lingered, preaching and healing for a whole month, and then winter coming suddenly he started for the Umbrian plain on an ass, led by the peasant who lent it, and whose churlish temper he cured by his gaiety and gentleness, during a rough night spent under a rock.

He stayed a few hours only at Santa Maria degli Angeli, perhaps fearful that God's sacred grace of the stigmata might become known. He went in the strength of that grace on a missionary tour in Umbria. But he was compelled to make it mounted on an ass, because his physical force failed daily. His growing blindness distressed all those who loved him. Amongst them was Elias, the vicar-general, in whose hands the government of the order was becoming more firmly concentrated. He seems at this time to have used his authority sparingly over Francis, but, although he sought his company, and was with him during part of this itinerary, the saint most carefully concealed from him the Divine favour bestowed at Alverna. They were at Foligno together when Elias spoke of a vision, in which it had been revealed to him that Francis had but two years more to live. Old age had descended upon him suddenly. Not only were his eyes darkened, but he suffered from constant sickness and frequent spitting of blood. Every physical organ was impaired, and he was always in pain. Fasts and austerities and poignant sorrow had accomplished this collapse.

While he could sing for joy the spare table of

the Lord had sufficed to keep him in a measure of health, but when grief invaded his heart the whole fabric of the man broke down.

Intermittent strife between Honorius and the Roman citizens forced the Pope into flight in the spring of 1225, first to Tivoli, and then to Rieti, where the papal court was established till the end of 1226. With him were his physicians, men whose small skill was made worthless by the nature of their favourite remedies, prescribed by the dogmatic teaching of centuries, but whose pretensions gave them a credit to which they were not entitled. Cardinal Ugolino was anxious that Francis should come to Rieti to have his eyes examined. He wrote an affectionate letter to this effect, and Brother Elias seconding his appeal, Francis was with much difficulty persuaded to accept his invitation.

His own forebodings were of death, for few could hope to survive the surgical butcheries of that age. He decided to pay Sister Clare a farewell visit before going to Rieti. It was near the end of July when he arrived at San Damiano. A few hours afterwards he was seized with such acute pain that his departure was delayed. Clare and the sisters nursed him during the fortnight of his illness. He was now quite blind, but desired more solitude and greater freedom than were possible within the walls of San Damiano. Clare with her own hands built a large hut of reeds and rushes in her garden, to which he was removed, and where, in spite of an

invasion of rats and mice by day and night, which let him neither eat nor sleep in peace, he recovered the serenity of mind and the joyousness of spirit which had so energised the first ten years of his apostolate. For in the midst of trials, which the childish mind of that age attributed to diabolic annoyance, he was comforted once again by the voice of his Master, who bade him rejoice greatly in his tribulations and infirmities and heed nothing but the priceless treasure which God had given him in reward of them, as if already he had entered into His kingdom.

His soul was filled with rapture and overflowed in praise, and the sisters often heard his voice lifted up in new songs while he walked under the olive-trees. The vision within was rendered to him a thousand-fold for the shadow fallen on his eyes.

One day he sat at table with the sisters and talked to St. Clare. Then he passed into a rapture away from them all. The Spirit was come upon him with utterance for the *Canticle of the Sun*, a Psalm of the Creator's glory :—

Most high, almighty and good Lord,
To Thee belong lauds, glory, honour and all blessing ;
To Thee alone, most high, do they belong,
And none is worthy to speak forth Thy name.

Be Thou praised, O my Lord, through all Thy creatures,
And in especial for the lordly Brother Sun,
Through whom Thou givest light by day ;
For fair is he and radiant with great splendour,
And symbolises Thee, O Thou most high.

Be Thou praised, O my Lord, for Sister Moon,
And for the Stars placed in the heavens,
Clear-shining, of great value and beautiful.

Be Thou praised, O my Lord, for Brother Wind,
And for the Air, and for the Cloud, and for all Weather,
Through which Thou givest bread unto Thy creatures.

Be Thou praised, O my Lord, for Sister Water,
For she is very useful, lowly, valuable and clean.

Be Thou praised, O my Lord, for Brother Fire,
Through whom Thou givest light by night,
For he is beautiful and glad, and brave and strong.

Be Thou praised, O my Lord, for Sister Earth, our mother,
For she feeds us and maintains us
And grows the varied fruits, and tinted blossoms and the grass.

He wished to send for Brother Pacifico to arrange the *Canticle of the Sun*, so that his minstrels might sing it everywhere. He rejoiced because the Lord had given him songs of praise for heaviness. Another was composed at this time, for the comfort and edification of the Sisters of Poverty, but it has been lost.

When September was half-way through, he went to Rieti, resting on the way with the poor priest of San Fabiano, whose hospitality was strained by the crowd of visitors seeking Francis, even prelates and their following not disdaining to pluck his ripening grapes, so that he feared for his vintage until the

saint reassured him and promised him more than the average measure of wine.

The Bishop of Rieti was his host, and showered attentions upon him. Already the Church was awake to his value, not as an inspiration and an example, but as an article of merchandise, and he had a sample of its solicitude for his remains in eager demands for morsels of his clothing, for his hair, for even the cuttings of his nails, which disturbed his stay at the Vescovado. He asked to be transferred to the hermitage of Monte Colombo. Various remedies had been vainly tried for his eyes, and the physicians decided on cautery. The heat of the iron gave him a moment's panic, but making over it the sign of the Cross, he cried: "Brother Fire, beautiful amongst all creatures, show me favour now; thou knowest how I love thee, show me courtesy this day."

And when the operation was over he rallied the brothers, who had fled from witnessing it: "O cowards, why did you flee? I felt no pain. Brother Doctor, if need be, begin again."

He was tortured with every contrivance of the faculty, steeped then in Cimmerian darkness, hacking, plastering, cauterising, and all in vain. He was brought back to Rieti for their convenience, and longed for some assuagement of his pain. He asked a brother to borrow a guitar and play to him, but the weakling would not do it lest it should be counted as a scandal. So in the peace of midnight an angel played to him upon a violin, and soothed

him into joy unutterable with the melodies of heaven.

When the cures were given up he felt a little better, and eager to redeem the time, he went from hermitage to hermitage in the valley of Rieti, preaching to the peasants and townspeople in the neighbourhood of each. He spent Christmas in a cell near Poggio Buscone, whither crowds came daily to listen to him. "You think me a great saint, do you," he said to them; "what will you say when you know that I did not fast all Advent?"

At Sant' Eleuterio, Greccio, Sant' Urbano, he preached or kept solitude in the hermitage at hand. The weather was cold and he sewed bits of cloth upon his own tunic and that of his companion. Some one gave him the skin of a fox for lining, and although he gladly accepted it, he sewed a bit of the fur outside, that all might see how little he mortified the flesh. It may have been during this winter that one day when he was near a fire the flame caught his under-garment and his companion put it out. "Nay, dear brother, harm not Brother Fire," he said; "if he wishes to eat my clothes, why should he not?" His joyous humour had returned to him—blind, enfeebled, in constant pain, suffering cold and exposure—because once more he was about his Master's business. But the time was short.

In spring he was urged to go to Siena to consult a physician who had some fame as an oculist. Four of the brothers accompanied him to a place

given to the Franciscans by Bonaventure, where Francis fell again grievously ill, vomiting blood in such quantities that his companions wept with mingled sorrow and terror, expecting his last hour. He asked that a saintly brother living at Arezzo might be sent for, and dictated to him a benediction of all his friars.

Brother Elias hastened to Siena on receiving news of his condition, and yielded to the saint's desire to return to his beloved Umbrian plain. But it was mid-April before he was fit to be carried in a litter, and then the journey began by stages, rendered very slow by his constant relapses. Cortona was the first halting-place, for the way was easy and the hermitage pleasant, but a seizure followed this transit, and some days were lost before his bearers could remove him. A roundabout route was chosen, for it was impossible to pass by Perugia, where the citizens were on the watch to possess themselves of the saint's body, dead or alive, and were prepared to take it by violence. So their passage from stage to stage had to be carefully and secretly chosen, and they made a long loop by Gubbio and Nocera. He rested many weeks at Bagnara, a hermitage above Nocera, famous still for healing waters and fine air, whence the Topino flows green as the sea down its shelving and rocky bed, to girdle Foligno's walls and to cross the plain.

News was sent to Assisi of his arrival and of his renewed illness. It was certain now that the end

was near. The Assisans sent soldiers to carry his litter, and to defend its precious burden should Perugia attempt to capture it. Down through Nocera, and by the long descent leading over a low pass between Subasio's bastions and the hill which buttresses them on the east, the soldiers bore him, turning towards Assisi on the southern slope and taking the path which lies beneath Sasso Rosso and the Benedictine Convent. A little way below the Castle of Sasso Rosso they halted at midday to rest and eat at a village on the slope walled and under Assisi's lordship. Here a poor man gladly gave Francis shelter, while his escort sought to purchase food. But they returned to him empty-handed, saying in jest: "Brother, needs must you give us some of your alms, for here can we have nought to eat." "No," said he, "for you put your trust in your flies and pence and not in God. Turn back and ask an alms for the love of God, and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they will give unto you abundantly." And so it came to pass that the Lord's table was well supplied.

His maladies were now increased by dropsy and his feet were swollen out of shape.

The Assisans came out to meet him with frenzied joy that they had secured his dying body. He was taken to the bishop's palace, in the piazza where twenty years before he had renounced the world. Guido was still in possession, and had a quarrel on his hands with the podestà, or high bailiff, of Assisi, whom he had excommunicated and forbidden

to do commerce with his clergy. The town suffered in pocket, and was agitated by the unseemly variance between its commercial and spiritual chiefs.

Into this disturbed atmosphere the tender, peace-loving servant of the Prince of Peace was brought. He pondered and prayed for such an inspiration as should end the discord, and it came to him robed in simplicity and grace. He composed a new stanza for his canticle:—

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, for those who forgive for
love of Thee,
And who bear infirmities and tribulations;
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
For by Thee, O most High, shall they be crowned.

Then he sent to invite the high bailiff to come into the piazza of the cloister with his fellow-magnates, and asked the bishop to meet them there with his canons. Francis could not be present, but he sent two of the four brothers, whose charge it was to tend him, Leo, Angelo, Rufino and Masseo, and bade them sing to those gathered in the piazza the *Canticle of the Sun*, with this new stanza at the end, beginning with a message from himself: "The blessed Francis in his sickness hath made a Lauds of the Lord as concerning His creatures to the praise of the Lord Himself and to the edification of our neighbour. Whence he doth beseech you that ye will hearken thereunto with great devoutness."

It happened that the high bailiff was especially

devoted to the saint, and rising, he listened to their singing with hands clasped as if in reverence, and accepted the counsel of peace as coming from the lips of God. "In truth I say unto you," he cried weeping, "that not only my Lord Bishop, whom I do desire and ought to have for my Lord, but were it one that had slain mine own brother or my son, him would I forgive." And then he flung himself at the bishop's feet saying: "Behold, I am ready to do all that thou dost wish, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His servant, the blessed Francis."

The bishop raised him with both hands, saying: "According to my office I should be humble, but because I am naturally quick of temper thou must needs forgive me." And embracing each other with tenderness, they kissed each other.

CHAPTER VIII

TESTAMENT, DEATH AND CANONISATION

1226—1230

Francis at the Vescovado—Laudes Domini—His Preoccupation with the Future of the Order—Mental Agony—Letter to the Order—"Welcome Sister Death"—Letter and Message to St. Clare—Benediction of Assisi—The Testament—Jacopa di Settisoli—Death—Funeral Procession—San Damiano—San Giorgio—Letter written by Elias—The Collis Inferni—Speculum Perfectionis—Gregory IX.—Elias Deposed—Building of San Francesco—Canonisation of St. Francis—Completion of the Lower Church—The Saint's Body hidden by Elias.

FRANCIS remained in the agony of protracted death for more than two months at the Vescovado. The four brothers appointed to serve him were, as we have seen, followers of the gospel Rule, true sons of Poverty. The monastic brothers were kept away from his presence, but enough of information about the degeneration which had followed organisation penetrated to his ears to make these weeks a long drawn-out martyrdom. He was in all things eager to submit to the will of God, but he confessed that three days of such agony, bodily and

mental, were worse than any death the cruelty of man could devise.

He was preoccupied with the future of the order. In spite of betrayal and disappointment, he cherished a hope that reaction would restore its first simplicity. This hope was the inspiration of a letter addressed to faithful souls, who might bring back the happy days of obedience to Jesus Christ.

While he lay there soldiers watched the palace day and night, relieved at intervals. This precaution must have intensified his suffering, revealing as it did such anxiety to keep the fragments to be left by death, such indifference to the whole immortal purpose of his spirit. But even this he bore without complaining, bidding the brothers sing aloud from time to time, that those who stood without might be refreshed and edified. For himself there was nothing so consoling as the praises of the Lord.

Indeed, his readiness to break out in these brought upon him a reproof from Vicar-General Elias, who deemed such cheerfulness a desecration of the holy gloom religiously pertinent to death. "Give me leave, brother," cried the saint, "to rejoice in the Lord and in His praises, and in mine own infirmities, seeing that by the grace of the Holy Ghost I am so joined and made one with my Lord, that, by His mercy, well may I be glad in Him most Highest."

Alas! these intervals of joy were few, for his heart was burdened by a sorrow which his companions rather quickened than assuaged.

"Where are they who have taken my brothers from me? Where are they who have robbed me of my children?" So in fever crises he would lament, and then he would reproach himself, as if it were his fault alone, and his spirit would be shaken at the thought that God would hold him responsible for the cowardice and selfishness by which he had wrecked the order. His cries of agony troubled his entertainers. They were awkward facts for all in authority, since it was impossible to smother them, impossible to dissociate from his deathbed those anguished protests against their action, or to misrepresent them as humble acquiescence. The four brothers who were his companions were witnesses to their truth, and perhaps it was partly due to this that these men were persecuted in after years by the friars. His natural masterfulness asserted itself in one of these outbreaks.

"Could I but be present at the Chapter-General I would let them know my will."

We are forced to believe the worst of Ugolino and Elias. The facts maintain that they had managed Francis by means of the most daring duplicity, and that he was led to believe that his intention for the order would be all the more secured by its organisation on the lines of monasticism. Good men both the average moral standard would admit them to be, but guilty of sins of the soul as black as hell.

It was in these circumstances that he dictated the letter already mentioned. It is addressed to

the entire Franciscan community, its ministers, directors, priests, friars and tertiaries. It begins :—

"Listen, sirs, you who are my sons and my brothers, give ear to my words. Open your hearts and obey the voice of the Son of God. Keep His commandments with all your heart and give perfect heed to His counsels. Praise Him for He is good, and glorify Him in your actions. God has sent you throughout the world, that by word and example you may bear witness to Him and teach all that He alone is omnipotent. Persevere in discipline and in obedience, and hold to that which you have promised Him with willing and firm mind." There follow instructions to the priests, amongst them this perfect counsel: "How holy, pure and worthy should be the priest, who touches with his hands, who receives into his mouth and into his heart, who distributes to others Jesus, living, glorified, the sight of Whom rejoices the angels. Understand your dignity, brother priests, and be holy, for He is holy." This section of the letter ends with prayer. "All-powerful, eternal, just and merciful God, give to us, to us unhappy poor ones, to do for Thy sake, what we know to be Thy will, and to will always that which pleases Thee; so that purified within, illuminated and made ardent by the flame of the Holy Spirit, we may follow in the footsteps of Thy beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ."

But of still greater importance is the latter half of this letter, addressed as it is to all Christians,

whether clergy or laity, whether men or women, to all those who live throughout the world.

These he entreats to go forward, to do far more than if they were "simple Christians," for they must renounce all that is not necessary, and not alone must they abhor all vice and all fleshly sins, but they must love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, obey their Redeemer's precepts and counsels, deny themselves and keep their body under control. "Be not wise after the flesh," he wrote to them, "but simple, humble and pure." And after many such injunctions, he ended: "I, Brother Francis, your little servant, I pray and conjure you by that love which is God —I, ready to kiss your feet—to receive with humility and love these words and all others which our Lord Jesus Christ has spoken, and to conform your conduct to them. And let those who receive them devoutly, and who understand them, make them known to others. And if they so persevere unto the end, may they be blessed by Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen."

Such was the saint's ideal for the conduct of those born into the Kingdom of God, a reflection of its Founder's laws.

Many beautiful incidents of this long, last illness have been preserved, and chiefly by Brother Leo in the *Mirror of Perfection*, which he wrote while all was fresh in his memory. He tells us how Francis sent for Brother Bernard to share a dainty dish, which had been prepared for him, and how he

blessed him as the first brother given him by God, and enjoined on the minister-general and the whole order that he should be loved and honoured. This benediction Brother Elias had the audacity to arrogate to himself, as we read in the first biography of Francis, by Tomaso of Celano, written by order of Gregory IX. in 1228, for the confutation of the *Mirror of Perfection*, and mainly inspired by Elias. We prefer to accept Brother Leo's account of the incident.

How the saint's wish was fulfilled may be gathered from the fact that later Bernard was hunted like a wild beast from place to place, and was saved from a violent death only through the kindness of a wood-cutter, who kept him hidden for two years in a forest upon the summit of Monte Sefro, not far from Nocera. Francis foresaw these trials, but predicted peace at the end for Brother Bernard, as it befel.

One day an old friend from Arezzo came to see him. He was a doctor, and Francis begged him to speak candidly about his state. Thus pressed, Bono told him that his infirmity was incurable, and that by the end of September, or early in October, he must die. Francis raised his hands to heaven and said aloud: "Welcome, my Sister Death!"

He set himself cheerfully to care for the last things, talking to one of the brothers, probably Leo, who sought to gladden him more by reminding him that comfort and infinite joy would

be his, "for thou shalt pass away from sore travail unto everlasting peace, away from short poverty unto endless wealth, away from brief death unto the life that faileth not, wherein face to face thou shalt behold thy Lord, whom thou hast here loved with so great a love."

Whereat Francis began to offer praises to the Lord, and bade the brother fetch Angelo to him, that both might sing the *Canticle of the Sun*. They chanted it while tears streamed from their eyes, and as they sang he prepared a new stanza for them, which they added to the rest. It ran:—

Be Thou praised, O my Lord, for our Sister Death,
From whom the body of none living may escape;
Woe unto them who die in mortal sin;
Blessed they who shall be found according to Thy most holy will,
Unto whom the second death can do no hurt.

This they sang, and ended with a Doxology:—

Praise ye and bless my Lord,
And thank and serve Him with a great humility.

It was probably before he left the Vescovado that Clare entreated permission to see him, for she herself was ill at the time and feared to die without his prayers. Apparently the Poor Ladies did not know how near to death he was himself, and he, unwilling to give them pain, dictated a bright letter for their spiritual consolation, and promised by word of mouth that they should see him once more. He bade them rest assured of pardon for all unconscious

negligence of the Rule, and he asked them not to carry their austerities too far, but to keep up their hearts and preserve a cheerful mind, putting from them all superfluity of sorrow. And he composed a song of praise in the vernacular, with music to which they might sing it. All his thoughts were turned to praise, and the sound of chanting filled his chamber, to the bewilderment of the Assisans, who held that a dying saint should be meditating on mortality, with which that lovely spirit had no commerce in life or in death. His joy was somewhat of a scandal to those earth-bound citizens, and both because he wished to die at Santa Maria degli Angeli, and because his host was scared at his celestial indiscretions, it was decided to carry him thither on a litter.

This was about the last week of September, when Umbrian grapes hang ripe on the festooned trees and the gatherers are busy for the vintage. He had become suddenly worse. If he were to die at Santa Maria degli Angeli the bearers must hasten. Their way was the same that Clare followed on the memorable night when first she took her stand side by side with Lady Poverty, but it was in the radiance and warmth of a summer noon that they carried him down from the Porta Mojano, through olive-garths and past farmhouses, turning to the right by the old road which led to the Hospital of San Salvatore delle Pareti, built by the Congregation of the Cross-bearers. Francis could see nothing of the sunlight, of the olives, of the homesteads. He was borne by

brothers whom he loved, and he sought to realise the well-remembered road by asking them from time to time what point they had reached.

When they set him down by the hospital to rest awhile before they began the long, straight road, he asked them to turn his litter so that his face might be set towards Assisi. Then raising himself a little, he lifted his hand in benediction, saying: "By reason of Thine abundant mercy Thou hast shown forth the multitude of Thy mercies in this city above all other cities, and hast chosen her unto Thyself to be the place and habitation of them that in truth acknowledge Thee and give glory to Thy holy name. Wherefore, I beseech Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, father of mercies, that she may be for ever the place and habitation of them that do truly acknowledge Thee and glorify Thy blessed and most glorious name from everlasting unto everlasting. Amen."

When he had so blessed Assisi, the procession formed again, and he was borne to the infirmary hut at Santa Maria degli Angeli. He revived in its freshness and silence. An interval of power was vouchsafed to him before the end. Meditating on the road by which God had led him, and on the revolt of the order, it occurred to him that to bequeath an account of his call and his obedience of the revealed will of God for him and his followers might be well alike for those who loved him and for the reconversion of the friars. The anxiety shown to exalt his relics may have suggested to him that

FRANCIS BLESSING ASSISI

From Giotto's fresco in the Church of Santa Croce, Florence

his ideal might in time secure acknowledgment; that the spirit of little Brother Francis might overcome where his presence and example had failed. When that time came it would help to have a clear statement of his vocation and his purpose. In this mind he dictated his testament, his bequest of poverty to all faithful friars. He shows a pathetic anxiety that this document should be accepted as meaning simply what it says; that no transforming glosses should be applied to its text, twisting it out of its intention. Well did he remember how the gospel Rule had been manipulated, how the plain directions of Christ had been belied into cunningly devised fables. Nor did he ask that his testament should take the place of the Rule of 1223, only that it should be read at the Chapters-General as well as that Rule, that the friars might remember *his* conception of the gospel.

This clause led Elias and Pope Gregory to absolve all the brethren from obedience to the testament, for the one document contrasted too powerfully with the other. He forbade the friars, too, to seek privileges from the court of Rome, whether for protection, for preaching, for possession of church or convent.

Indeed, no part of this testament could be pleasing to authority, for throughout is the essential quality of the Spouse of Poverty, tenacious obedience to the Lord who called him, tenacious disregard for the power which has dared to belittle that Lord.

To all who shared this obedience he bequeathed the blessing of God the Father in the world above, the blessing of His beloved Son and of the Comforter in this world. "And I," he ended, "little Brother Francis, your servant, I confirm as much as I am able this most holy benediction."

Then he dictated a testament for the Sisters of Poverty, blessing them too and commending them to the brethren as members of one family in Christ Jesus.

The end was near; his thoughts were toward those whose spiritual life he had helped, who were dear to him as children to a father. Amongst them was a Roman lady given to hospitality towards him and his companions, a devout tertiary and his personal friend. He felt some anxiety that she should be acquainted with his condition, lest the news of his death should too greatly grieve her. So he dictated a letter to Brother Jacopa, as he used to call her, praying her to come to Santa Maria degli Angeli, bringing with her new cloth of the colour of ashes, new cord to girdle his burial garment, wax for the funeral lights, and, remembering her delight in hospitality, he asked her to make for him some little almond cakes, like some which he had eaten in her house, called mostaccioli.

The letter was written and put on one side until a messenger was found, but before he set out, there came a knocking at the door, and lo! the lady herself stood without, her maid with her, carrying

just the things which Francis had asked her to bring. For it had so happened that while she was praying the day before his very thoughts had been revealed to her, and she had gathered all together, and had hastened to reach the plain ere it was too late. Special permission was granted to her to enter the hut and to serve him with the little cakes, but he tasted them only, although he lay upon his couch in radiant peace. Madonna Jacopa stayed until the end; his shroud-habit was made of the grey cloth which she brought and the wax was turned into candles.

September closed, and Thursday, 1st October, was come. He desired that day to signify that he passed from life into immortality the faithful Spouse of Poverty, and bade his companions place him unclad upon the ground, where, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said: "I have done my duty, may Christ teach you yours." But the brother appointed to be his warden took a tunic and under garment and clothed him, imposing obedience on him, as these things had been given to him in alms, and he was laid upon his bed again, whence he blessed them, laying his hand upon each head in turn. All the friars in residence at the Portiuncula were called to his side to receive the blessing, and on this occasion Brother Elias was present. Then he broke bread and gave it to them all, bidding them eat it. Afterwards he asked Brothers Angelo and Leo to sing the *Canticle of the Sun*, joining his failing voice to theirs. Then he commenced to chant Psalm cxlii.

"I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication."

Again, on their petition, he pardoned the errors of his brethren, including those absent, and lay through Friday until Saturday evening in the peace of God, "his refuge and his portion in the land of the living". Around him stood the faithful few, weeping as they chanted songs of praise. On Saturday evening, 3rd October, just after vespers, a flock of crested larks wheeled about the infirmary hut, and seemed to all like a winged choir sent "to exalt the Lord along with him". They were his best loved birds, for "their intent seemed ever toward the praise of God".

When night fell Francis had gone to the presence of his Lord.

"He hungers no more, neither thirsts any more, and God has wiped away all tears from his eyes."

Next day, Sunday, 4th October, 1226, his body was borne to the Church of San Giorgio, where it was provisionally entombed. This haste was due to Brother Elias, who seems to have made all his preparations in advance of the expected death. Francis had desired to be buried in the little church of the Portiuncula, but the Assisans, who flocked down to the plain when the tidings of his death reached them at dawn, were determined that his remains should be protected, lest the Perugians took them by force.

The citizens formed themselves into a procession,

THE DEATH OF FRANCIS

From Giotto's fresco in the Church of Santa Croce, Florence

headed by Elias and the friars; it resembled a triumph rather than a funeral, so joyous were the good people over their treasure, but some tears were shed on the way. A détour was made to San Damiano that Clare and her sisters might look upon his face once more, and raising his body from the bier the friars held it up to the opening where the sisters were used to communicate, that they might touch him and bid him farewell, which each of them did with weeping and lamentation, "seeing themselves made orphans of the consolations and admonitions of so dear a father".

Then, waving the oak and olive branches which they carried, and breaking out once more into hymns of praise, the citizens climbed up through the olive-yard and entered Assisi by the Porta Mojano, moving slowly up to San Giorgio. Here, where he had been taught in childhood, and where his first sermon had been preached, he was laid in an oblong marble urn covered with an iron grating, and a guard was set by day and night.

Elias announced the death of St. Francis in a Latin letter addressed to Brother Gregory of Naples —at that time Provincial Minister of France—but intended for the whole order. This letter, like the sarcophagus at San Giorgio, was evidently prepared before the event of which it treated. There are no records of those most touching and inspiring weeks at the Vescovado and the infirmary. We gather, while spelling through its paragraphs, that it was the result of his discovery of the stigmata,

which on his bed of sickness Francis was no longer able to conceal. Elias seizes on this miracle for his purpose, not on the holy living and blessed dying. This alone seems memorable to him, this glorifies the father of the order, for this the brethren are to praise God, not for the life lived, the example given. He interpolates in haste, as writing a post-script: "In the first hour of the night preceding the fourth of October our father and brother Francis passed to Christ." And then he resumes his injunctions to mourn, to pray, to say masses.

In fact, Francis sealed by the stigmata was a more valuable relic than Francis the follower of Christ, and this letter is the best commentary on the saint's anxiety to keep the marks a secret. Alas! his care for the spiritual life of the order was defeated now. The stigmata were matter of common talk. Already crowds hastened to Assisi and San Giorgio; already miracles were ascribed to the wasted frame which he had left behind.

Brother Elias rose to the height of his opportunity. For such a relic, should not a shrine be built, which would draw devotees from every land and make more illustrious an order which called itself by the saint's name?

His first intention was to build a commemorative church down on the plain, perhaps to enclose Santa Maria degli Angeli, or, as is more probable, the infirmary hut where Francis died. It is possible that this church was to have been small and after the pattern preferred by the saint, but contrary to

APPEARANCE OF FRANCIS JUST AFTER DEATH TO THE BISHOP OF ASSISI AND TO A DYING FRIAR

From Giotto's fresco in the Church of Santa Croce, Florence

his wishes nevertheless, since it was his express provision that the friars were to possess no churches, only to use those lent to them or for which they paid a rent. Down at the settlement, however, the companions and first followers of Francis resided and watched the vicar-general's movements jealously, and the Assisans were unwilling to let the body be sepulchred outside their walls. A new scheme presented itself to his ambition, and this he proceeded to carry out.

Voluntary offerings were made daily at the tomb in San Giorgio, some of them of great cost. It was obvious that an appeal to the Christian world would result in contributions large enough for the erection of a church that would draw the gaze of Christendom not alone to the saint, but to the order of which Elias and the cardinal were determined to allege him the founder. For it must not be forgotten that Francis did not found the order which for nearly seven centuries has called itself Franciscan.

A low hill divided from Assisi by a chasm completed the western flank of Monte Subasio. It is said to have been used as a gallows-hill, and was known as the Collis Inferni.

So it was attributed to Francis that in his humility he had expressed a wish to be buried there. The ground belonged to Messer Simon Puzzarelli, with whom Elias entered into negotiations, but these were not at first made public.

In the meantime, the brothers at Santa Maria

degli Angeli were indignant alike because of what they knew and of what they surmised. Brother Leo, who was diligently engaged all winter and spring with his *Mirror of Perfection*, revealed certain aspects of Brother Elias in its pages, which shed light on the opposition suffered by Francis from both the man and the minister. This book was finished on 11th May, 1227, and was zealously studied before and during the Chapter-General of 30th May. Its effect was considerable. Elias was deposed and Giovanni Parenti elected vicar-general.

Other influences had conspired towards this crisis. Elias initiated the insane policy of treating the zelators, as they were called, with harshness, and Leo, the friend of Francis, was the first to be so persecuted.

By the end of May his plans had so far ripened that he placed a marble vase on the Collis Inferni to receive money offerings for the church. This was probably about the end of March, or early in April, just after the death of Honorius and the election to the Papacy of Cardinal Ugolino as Gregory IX. The step was a flagrant defiance of the saint's injunctions, and even of the Rule of 1223, and it is evident that Elias was acting with the knowledge of his protector, the Pope. It created a scandal amongst the older brethren, which affected even those who were in agreement with the new order. Brother Leo sought Egidio's advice, but the latter could suggest nothing, for interference meant per-

secution even unto death. But Leo was stimulated to redoubled zeal in making known the saint's mind about the building of churches and houses, which he set in the forefront of his book with anxious repetition. He was stimulated also to an act of violence. He and others of the companions went to the Collis Inferni and knocked down the marble offertory, breaking it in pieces, and this was the beginning of trouble for Leo.

Elias was for a short time disconcerted by this unexpected blow, but, aware of Giovanni Parenti's feebleness, he went on with his work as if no such minister existed. He corresponded with Pope Gregory, used his influence with the majority of the order, and gradually won back his dominance over the rest. Only the zelators remained irreconcilable. It was difficult for those friars, who had known Francis less intimately than they, to resist the impression which Elias made upon them, as one acting in concert with Gregory. So he pushed on his preparations for the building, towards which money poured in from all parts of Europe—crowned heads, nobles and ecclesiastics bringing and sending their gifts. Simon Puzzarelli made over the Collis Inferni with eager generosity to Brother Elias for the Pope, that an "oratory or church for the most holy body of St. Francis" might be built upon it, although the deed of gift was not fully made out until after the ceremony of canonisation in 1228.

At first Elias may have purposed to build a small

sanctuary over the tomb, but it is evident that the wealth flowing in for the shrine altered his plan, and that he began to design the beautiful upreared basilica and the convent structures which now dominate the plain. He secured the assistance of Brother Filipo of Campello, an architect. He seems to have been conversant with Gothic art, and at once suggested that no other could harmonise so well with the site, precipitous on either side, and needing just such arched substructures as were built in the eleventh century for the Benedictine convents and churches at Subiaco. Probably Brother Filipo knew Santa Scolastica and the Sacro Speco well, as it is pretty certain so did Brother Elias, and had noted their fitness to the rocky heights on which they were reared in such wise as to become almost on integral part of the mountain. Here in 1052 the French abbot, Humbert, had rebuilt Santa Scolastica, its cathedral, bell-tower and cloister, all in the pointed style beloved in his native land; while in 1075 his successor, Abbot John, although an Italian, carried out the restoration by building the beautiful Gothic church of the Holy Cave, the middle church, as we know it, where Pope Gregory was completing the chapel of San Gregorio, on one wall of which Brother Oddo painted the portrait of his friend, Brother Francis. Franciscans were well acquainted with St. Benedict's Cave and its shrines.

Gothic art, too, had invaded Italy somewhat during the generation prior to the founding of

the Assisan San Francesco, no fewer than three Gothic Cistercian abbeys having been built between 1187 and 1217. It is most likely that Elias and his assistant planned the two churches of San Francesco with full knowledge of these, and, as means were ample, that the former decided to surpass in grandeur and beauty all the existing churches in this style. Autumn and winter were spent in these preliminaries. On 29th April, 1228, Pope Gregory published a Bull announcing that it was suitable that a church should be built to honour the memory of the Blessed Francis and to receive his body. He invited all the faithful to send offerings to this end, requiting them with an indulgence of forty days. Elias ordered the friars to be carriers of these offerings from their various mission fields, so we hear of contributions from even Jerusalem and Morocco.

Francis was already canonised in the heart of the Italian people, and the Pope decided to set his formal seal and benediction upon their election. At variance with Rome, it was a convenient moment for him to come to Assisi, and he reached the world-famed city in the middle of July. The great solemnity took place upon the 16th of that month in the church of San Giorgio.

All the citizens trooped to see and hear his Holiness. He played the rôle in masterly fashion. Clad in cloth of gold and surrounded by cardinals, he sat for their edification on his pontifical chair until the moment arrived for his rising to deliver

a eulogy of St. Francis. It was couched in resplendent metaphors, with sobs for emphasis. The function ended with the papal benediction for Assisi.

The day after he crossed to the Collis Inferni and laid the foundation-stone. Elias with his workers had toiled to bring the ground into sufficient order for this ceremony, and he derived the fullest personal satisfaction from the power with which it invested him. Gregory renamed the spot Collis Paradisi.

In addition to these functions the Pope, instructed concerning the harm done by Leo's book, which he had doubtless read, gave orders that the learned Tomaso di Celano should compile the authorised biography of St. Francis. Celano had been in Germany for some years, engaged in mission work. He was, therefore, personally unacquainted with the last as with the first years of the saint's apostolate, and could only know what happened through those who had been present. But, as a student, he was not in sympathy with the zelators, and he was engaged to produce a life which should present and misrepresent the events so simply told by Brother Leo in such a way as to magnify Elias, the Curia and the new order. Naturally, Elias was his main authority for both matter and manner of the earlier and later years. He was urged to complete his biography as quickly as possible, and by working all autumn and winter he did so by the middle of February, 1229, so that it received Gregory's sanction on the 25th of that month.

It appeared, therefore, nine months after the *Speculum Perfectionis*, and put a new gloss on all that had happened.

Elias remained in effect the untitled chief of the new order, and he pushed on the building with such imperious urgency that the lower church was completed in two years. He commanded an army of workmen, craftsmen, artists. His architect was Brother Filipo of Campello, unless we adopt the latest view that he planned these superb structures himself, and that Filipo's technical knowledge alone was required. Architecture was well understood in Assisi, which in the fifteenth century possessed its own lodge of the Comacine Guild, and where the beautiful churches of San Rufino and San Pietro had been built in the eleventh century.

Men crowded from the plain and the neighbouring towns, eager to help the Assisans in an enterprise which promised both spiritual and temporal reward, many of them ready to toil for love of the saint, whose coming and going amongst them were scarcely become memories, so fresh and sweet were they to think upon, while to this day they abide fresh in Umbria.

Pope Gregory, informed of all, declared the new church to be head and mother church of the order, another despite done to Francis, who had pledged himself and his followers to hold the Benedictine Portiuncula as their centre and mother. Privileges, too, were showered upon the basilica ; no interdict

might interrupt its functions, its convent was made inviolable. Little wonder that the testament was suppressed and that the friars were exonerated from obedience to its injunctions.

There remained the consecration of the edifice and the translation of the saint's body to his tomb beneath the high altar. The opening day of the Pentecostal Chapter-General, which Giovanni Parenti was to hold in the new convent, was chosen for these ceremonies. To him the Pope gave the translation in charge. He wished to be present himself at the consecration, but was prevented by political troubles.

The 25th of May dawned amidst the rejoicings of an immense crowd of friars and tertiaries come to Assisi from all parts of Italy. If the Chapter were held in the convent, the assembly had to encamp in the open air, as in times past.

The procession was formed at San Giorgio, before whose door stood a car drawn by two white oxen draped in purple cloth and garlanded with flowers. The legates sent by Gregory assisted Brother Elias to carry the sarcophagus from the church and place it upon the car. It was covered with a piece of rich brocade sent by the Queen Mother of France. The car was guarded by the three legates and Elias, while behind it came the friars two by two carrying palms and lights, and followed by the clergy and magistrates of Assisi. Down the long street they passed, while flowers were showered from the windows upon the car, and then slowly up to the

Collis Paradisi. Just as they were singing a hymn in praise of St. Francis, composed by Gregory himself, and were nearing the wonderful new church, an extraordinary incident occurred, expected, indeed, by Elias and the magistrates, but wholly unforeseen by the friars, the clergy and the people. It is difficult to say whether the legates were privy to it or not, but we may assume their ignorance. Armed men suddenly invaded the crowd, seized the sarcophagus and carried it into the church, closely followed by Elias, who turned to shut and fasten the door with heavy bolts and bars.

Once inside, he buried the saint deep in a sepulchre prepared down in the mountain itself and lined with huge blocks of travertine, far below the high altar, and so marvellously concealed that nearly six centuries passed without its discovery, which took place only in 1818.

The baffled crowd was indignant; the friars were astounded; the festival so long anticipated was wrecked. Something like terror brooded over the day, which was to have crowned Assisi's annals. The magistrates slunk home knowing very well that they would be exonerated from blame, and that in the meantime this scandal had secured for ever the great relic to their city.

But another comedy had to be played before the matter ended. The legates, who had come laden with Gregory's gifts and benedictions, returned to him in consternation, followed by friars with loud complaints, by Giovanni Parenti, by appeals from

the outraged zelators. It was essential that the grotesque drama should be acted out; so Brother Elias, the conventual friars, the church itself were laid under interdict. The magistrates were summoned before the Curia to explain their non-resistance to this sacrilege. Elias was scathingly censured, and perhaps Gregory rather enjoyed scolding his masterful tool.

For a time Brother Elias was under a cloud. Giovanni Parenti was again elected vicar-general in spite of a bold *coup manqué* from his rival. When time sufficient had elapsed, Pope Gregory published the Bull *Quo Elongati*, by which Elias was justified in all his actions, and the farce ended with his triumph four months after his act of desecration.

He used it to resume work at the churches. By 1236 the upper church was roofed; three years later the bell-tower was full of bells. Fresco painters were at work, and only Cimabue and Giotto were awaited to make the walls of both upper and lower sanctuaries as fair within as they were without, the glory of Catholic Christendom and its paradox.

PART III

ST. FRANCIS IN ART

The Earliest Biographical Frescoes—The First Portraits—St. Francis, by Cimabue—By Lorenzetti—Giotto's Frescoes in the Upper Church—Above the High Altar in the Lower Church—Santa Croce in Florence—Fra Angelico—Benozzo Gozzoli at Montefalco—Ghirlandajo—Benedetto da Majano—Donatello—Andrea della Robbia—Garofalo—Agostino Carracci.

THE subject of this chapter should be treated in a volume rather than merely suggested in a few pages, but no life of the saint can be considered complete without at least a glance at some of those representations in easel painting, in fresco and in sculpture, which, from 1230 onwards, sought to perpetuate his memory. In dealing with the older pictures and frescoes we must not let slip the historic sense.

When Francis died, books were the possession of princes, monasteries and cathedrals, not of peoples, as they are now. The uneducated had none, and the main bulk of every people was uneducated, in our modern sense, which makes book knowledge a fundamental test of education, one-sided, inadequate and misleading although it be. When a saint died,

and it was deemed wise to prolong his memory in such a form as might appeal to unlettered men, women and children, the natural process was to paint a memoir on the walls of the sanctuary raised and dedicated to him, that all who came within them might read and learn what manner of man he had been. The frescoed churches are biographies, and, since the lives of saints touched those of the world's rulers as well, they are often histories too.

Brother Elias set fresco painters to work at the lower church so soon as its walls were covered in. There are remains of five of their attempts on the left wall of the nave, and of a series on the opposite wall, whose scenes are taken from the Passion of our Lord, but only four of them can now be identified. The Franciscan incidents on the left wall are somewhat clearer, and may be regarded as the first effort to memorialise the saint. We detect his renunciation of the world; Pope Innocent's dream; the sermon to the birds; the stigmata—of which only the seraphic vision is now visible—and his death. It is difficult to discover in the conflict of critical surmises any sure clue to the artist of these frescoes. Perhaps they were painted by the Pisan Giunta, perhaps by some artist amongst the Brothers Minor. Whoever executed them was still dominated by Byzantine conventionalism, although they contain a hint of struggle from its bondage, uncouth and pathetic, which invests them with interest.

With Giunta we come to the earliest portraits of

EARLY PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS

Now in the Sacristy of the Upper Church at Assisi

Francis. That by Brother Oddo at the Sagro Speco, near Subiaco, we have already described, but there are three said to belong to 1230, or a few years later, attributed to this artist. One of these hangs outside the chapel built round the infirmary hut at Santa Maria degli Angeli; a second is in the Franciscan Convent al Monte close to Perugia, where Brother Egidio spent many years; and the third is preserved in the inner sacristy of San Francesco di Assisi.

The first and second may be by Giunta Pisano, because characteristics which distinguish his other works are observable in them, especially the Byzantine treatment of eyes and attitude; but it is not so easy to pronounce judgment as to the painter of the third. It has greater delicacy and sweetness than the others, and is referred by Father Giuseppe Fratini to a Sienese artist, one of a group who succeeded the Pisan workers, and who, while excelling these in freedom and grace, had not attained the independence of Cimabue and his successors. If this hypothesis have value, it belongs to a date later than that usually attributed to it, probably to the time of some artist from Siena, who was the forerunner of Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti.

The tradition repeated to visitors is that this portrait is painted on half of a slab of wood upon which St. Francis was laid after death that his body might be washed before it was robed for burial. On the one half, we are told, his figure, with four scenes representing miracles through his agency,

was painted; on the other half the unpleasing portrait of Santa Maria degli Angeli. But these two are manifestly by different hands. Father Fratini has a theory which seems better than the scanty tradition. It is possible that Giunta painted on two wooden panels the rough portraits of Santa Maria degli Angeli and of San Francesco al Monte, perhaps also that in San Bernardino's chapel; but an artist friar, or one of the Sienese school, painted for the sepulchral altar of the lower church two pictures on wood, St. Francis in the middle of each, two scenes of miracles on either side of him, the panels being placed back to back, and so framed that the faithful kneeling at either back or front of the altar might see the form of the great patriarch. In the Vatican Gallery may be found a picture of St. Francis painted on a panel of the same size, in the same manner, and flanked, too, by scenes of miracles. Fratini's speculation that this may once have been the counterpart of the portrait in the sacristy is strengthened by the fact that its four miracles are different from those represented in the other.

We hear of another piece of wood besides that on which his body was laid, one which covered his rough sarcophagus in San Giorgio. It is probable, however, that one slab served both purposes, and the loose construction of even cherished traditions, as well as of the most plausible criticism, leaves us only sure that the portrait in the sacristy belongs to the thirteenth century and to its second or third quarter. It is a noteworthy portrait in spite of

this uncertainty. Whoever painted it understood the angelic strain which etherialised the saint's humanity, imparting to it a quality so celestial that generations may be pardoned for accounting him divine. We may almost believe that one who knew and loved him limned those delicate features, quickened them with sorrow and with joy.

Another point is of secondary interest. His robe is coloured grey, rather deep and blackish, but still indubitably grey, and in this resembles the fresco of Subiaco, which is free, however, from the darkening effect of altar smoke and incense. Just such a tinge might be expected on a picture which once stood on the high altar of a church. In one hand Francis holds a cross, an attribute to which he is entitled as Patriarch of the Franciscan Order; in the other a gospel, on whose open pages can be read that principle of the saintly life, which to him contained its very essence: *Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende omnia que habes et da pauperibus.* The stigmata on hands and feet and the halo are clearly marked.

Another portrait belonging to the thirteenth century is in the church of the San Sargiano, near Arezzo, and is attributed to Margaritone of Arezzo, who was born ten years after the saint died, and who, therefore, followed the earlier portraits, and more particularly that of the Holy Cave, painting him with his pointed hood drawn over his head. In all of these the robe is grey, this colour having been used during nearly two centuries for the Franciscan habit.

By 1252 both upper and lower churches were completed, and next year Pope Innocent IV. consecrated them with great splendour of function. He came accompanied by a court of cardinals and princes to Assisi in April, and took up his residence in the convent buildings for six months. The solemnity was consummated on the fifth Sunday after Easter, and both sanctuaries received the papal benediction.

In that year Cimabue was thirteen years old.

This long residence, and the privileges showered upon convent and basilica, revived the interest of Christendom, and contributions for fuller decoration increased to such an extent that the friars could dream of perfecting their church. But art for the moment was in the trough of the wave. Wearied of Byzantine tyranny, artists turned towards the wind, which blew from the north, for a deep inspiration. Already it had invigorated Italian architecture; it had ruffled the stagnant art of Pisa; it had awakened the dreamers of Siena; it stirred amongst the dry bones in Florence. The friars had to wait awhile, and in the meantime their wealth accumulated. Even Assisi, impoverished as it was by internal and external commotions, made civic and individual sacrifices for the church of its patron.

Renaissant art reached Assisi with Cimabue. There is a disposition amongst our newest critics to look upon this man as apocryphal, to sink him in later fame; but we may ignore them and

continue firm in the faith which was Vasari's, Tuscany's, Italy's.

He came to work in the upper church, where his great scriptural frescoes, his noble angels, prophets, fathers of the church, have been cruelly maltreated by time, and are suffering gradual effacement from the damp, to which the maladroit interference of a government commission has recklessly surrendered them. But with these we have nothing to do. It is his sublime Madonna in the lower church—almost intact, except for the encroachment on its left of a door leading into St. Mary Magdalen's Chapel — that includes a figure of St. Francis, standing beyond the Queen of Heaven and her angel courtiers, looking somewhat dwarfed beside her majesty, his face shorter and rounder than in the first portraits, his lips thick and ungainly, his eyes peaceful, almost smiling, as if he were amused to find himself in such great company, which, sooth to say, ignores his presence absolutely. It is less attractive than other portraits, and Cimabue seems to have made it a point to differentiate the *poverello* in kind as well as in degree.

Pleasanter is Lorenzetti's St. Francis in the transept to our left, as we face the high altar, but it belongs to a date more than half a century later. It is like Cimabue's in one respect only. The face is rounder and shorter than in the earlier pictures. But its features are refined, and the Madonna points him out to her babe with a gesture of

turned-back thumb peculiarly Italian, while Jesulino, although much surprised at his appearance, bestows upon him the benediction requested. On the other side stands St. John the Evangelist, truly companion to St. Francis in spirit, although not his name-saint as was the other John, herald of our Lord. This picture is very lovely, with delicate treatment and golden background, and its date is that of the second group of Sienese artists, who filled up the spaces left by Giotto and his disciples.

Fifty years earlier than Lorenzetti, Giotto arrived, a lad of twenty, fresh from Cimabue's workshop. Apparently the lower church, beneath which St. Francis was sepulchred, was more precious to the friars than the upper, whose roofs, transepts and apse were now jewelled with Cimabue's creations, for not until he had filled its nave with the story of Francis was he permitted to work below. His frescoes triumphantly testified his power, and he was invited to obliterate all that was inadequate in the lower church and to fill the spaces above the high altar, the walls, roof, arch and shallow chapel of San Nicholas with those inspirations of his genius, which make this church one of the marvels of Christendom.

Giotto was invited to come by the Franciscan General, Brother Giovanni da Muro, whose term of office lasted from 1296 to 1304, when he was made a cardinal. These dates approximately fix the time of his work in Assisi, where he not only compassed

the frescoes in San Francesco, but found time to design and superintend those of the right transept in Santa Chiara, the church raised and dedicated to St. Clare after her death.

Cimabue and his pupils had not filled the walls of the nave in the upper church. It is probable that other commissions prevented his carrying out this part of the scheme of decoration, and that he commended his pupil Giotto as one able to fill these with scenes from the saint's life as was desired. Already there must have been an authoritative sequence of incidents drawn up from San Bonaventura's biography and from the *Speculum Perfectionis*, now no longer in discredit as before the excommunication of Brother Elias. These were founded on the testimony of witnesses, and were not yet old enough to have become tradition, although some of them were already slipping into its golden haze. San Bonaventura's *Life* was as much inspired by tenderness and insight as Leo's. It was in greater repute at this time than Celano's, which had been recast and considerably altered. Apparently it was the main source for this sequence by Giotto, who, with his colleagues, filled eight and twenty spaces with these accredited scenes. They begin at the end of the nave nearest the altar with the prediction of greatness accorded to Francis in his worldly youth, and continue through his conversion, vocation, renunciation, reception by Innocent III., ministrations, missions, visions, miracles, stigmata, to his death and canonisation. That every scene was

planned and drawn by one master brain and hand is evident except to decadent modern critics, whose genius is that of Mephistopheles, a spirit of steady denial. The composition far outsteps the conventional grouping, from which even Cimabue could not deliver his art. With Giotto, we are on the way to Raphael, but our point of departure detains us with a wealth of suggestion, subtlety, humour, delicacy, sincerity, absent from our goal. Never were pictures more imbued than these with one mind, and that a very mirror of what it contemplated, magically reflecting in added grace, vivacity and charm what Bonaventura in words, and the piazzas, palaces, sanctuaries of Assisi, in the concrete, presented as material for translation into etherial form and colour.

Giotto adopts in these beautiful pictures the curved, oval face, which has been preferred by many artists in depicting Francis. We do not know whether he was cognisant of a cast reputed to have been taken from the saint's features after death, in whose authenticity it is difficult to believe. Used as the guide of sculptors and painters in renaissance times, this cast indicates a short face, delicately moulded, with great breadth of brow. Giotto does not make breadth of brow a special feature, but aims at a fine oval, thin even in his presentments of the young son of Bernardone, although never emaciated to the degree suggested by the early portraits.

When Giovanni da Muro was satisfied that

Giotto's frescoes in the upper church were worthy of their subject, he invited him to complete the wall and roof decoration of the lower church, and it is here that we find his masterpieces. Again, his composition and colouring are dominant in the frescoes of right and left transepts, on roof and wall, although Taddeo Gaddi and Puccio Capanna may have carried out their execution. The first series presents scenes in the life of the Madonna and the infancy of our Lord, and Giotto's conceptions fill the whole space except that occupied by Cimabue's Madonna and by the Crucifixion next to it, said to have been painted by Brother Martino under Giotto's guidance. Simone Martini's exquisite figures of Franciscan saints are below the frescoes. In the Crucifixion we find St. Francis kneeling to the left of the Cross. One of Simone Martini's saints is meant for him, but it is the least attractive of the five.

The left transept is covered with scenes from the Passion of our Lord, and its decoration culminates in another Crucifixion of fine workmanship, which Fratini maintains to have been painted by Cavallini, commissioned by Walter, Duke of Athens, and for a time Tyrant of Florence, who tried to gain the favour of the Minorites.

But we must go to the great triangular frescoes over the high altar to find Francis once more. Here Giotto allowed his imagination full play, and himself carried out its wonderful suggestions. The saint's life had been storied, its analogy to that of

his Lord and Master fully illustrated, but there remained his work to chronicle in a manner which would present both his ideal and his rigorous practice. For these allegories are realistic enough, and to the genuine Franciscan are the only realities.

First, it was desired to have the apotheosis of their patriarch facing the nave, so that all who came towards the altar might see him throned gloriously in glory. The central figure, dressed in white dalmatic and mantle of dark brocade, is on a throne, surrounded by rejoicing angels so full of life, colour and almost sound, that we are conscious of their longing to make up to him for his afflictions here, with "an exceeding weight of glory" yonder. When the high altar is lighted up, and we approach it by the nave, this fresco glows with beauty. Opposite to it is the mystical marriage of Francis to the Lady Poverty of his dreams in those years of God's guidance in the wilderness. Christ Himself unites the half-shrinking bridegroom to Poverty, whose worn garments and faded beauty present no lure to win the man, while they but thinly veil the soul which Jesus loved on earth. For, vowed to Poverty, what shall separate him from the love of Christ? And even while he gazes half-unwilling on his bride, she reveals to him the blossoms of a heavenly joy and purity, which their union ensures to him for ever, and which far outweigh the scorn of dogs, the contumely of men blind to her immortal beauty. Beneath he reappears in Giotto's scheme of thought, as parting gladly with

his mantle to the poor knight, his angel leading him, while on the other side miser and worldlings turn from their heavenly guide for ever. For the pictures mean, as Francis meant, that man has choice of the life that now is, or the life that is to come, but that no man can have both unless he has overcome in the life that now is those desires of the eye and that pride of life in which Christ had neither part nor lot. Such renunciation here means glory there, and the one picture is the complement of the other.

The side pictures illustrate the vows of chastity and obedience incumbent on all who enter the orders of penitence. There is no attempt to minimise the difficulty of keeping these vows. Chastity dwells on high; to attain to her heavenly precincts needs constant warfare against sin. The pilgrims must be armed with fortitude, must climb under the banner of purity. And it needs such suffering as Christ's crucifixion to resist the alluring call from every side. Warriors on earth, the faithful who attain become glorified spirits when they reach the courts of heaven where she dwells. On the left, at the base of this fresco, St. Francis urges representatives of his orders to the upward course, the three figures being meant for Giovanni da Muro, one of the Sisters of Poverty—perhaps St. Clare—and a cordelier of the Third Order, for whom Dante himself was Giotto's model.

The fresco illustrating obedience faces this, and symbolises with a yoke imposed upon a kneeling

friar—with an unbridled centaur, who recoils from the revelation made to him by his reflection in the mirror of prudence, the need of restraint, the horror of license, the beauty of voluntary submission, of the will hallowed by obedience. And that this obedience is unto God is shown by the figure of St. Francis yoked and directed by the two hands of Christ.

The church of the Holy Cross was begun in Florence in 1294, Arnolfo being its architect. Giotto did not start his work upon its walls until long after Arnolfo's death, which happened in 1310. His fame had greatly increased, and he was soon to be asked to build his wonderful campanile beside the Duomo, whose foundation-stone was laid in 1298, while he was busy at Assisi. After his work there, he had, according to the high method of the greatest artists in Italy, studied architecture, sculpture, relief and mosaic, and could with his own hand achieve masterpieces in each kind of art.

It was about 1320 that the Capella dei Bardi della Libertà was put into his hands for decoration, when he was well over forty years of age. The Franciscans of Florence were anxious to secure for its walls some incidents in their patriarch's life, like those renowned over all Christendom, in San Francesco di Assisi. They had already placed over the high altar a portrait of Francis, said to have been painted by Cimabue, which they tried to consider an authentic likeness. On the vaulting of the Bardi Chapel is another portrait, and

Poverty, Chastity and Obedience are personified on its remaining quarters.

Here, too, the four great saints of the order other than Francis, one of them only just canonised, were painted on each side of the window by Giotto himself, and St. Louis, King of France, beloved of the friars, remains there beautiful to-day. But the artist's especial work was to fill the spaces made by the Gothic arching with incidents in the patriarch's life. He was hampered by want of room, by difficulties of form, but he left six frescoes, variants of six in the upper church at Assisi, reminding us of these and yet different. Francis visiting the Sultan of Egypt and recommending to him the gospel of Christ is perhaps the finest of these, but his renunciation rivals it in force and interest. Giotto is faithful to his first conception of the saint.

A whole century passed ere St. Francis became again a leading inspiration in art. It was natural that he should appeal to the Dominican artist, Fra Angelico, who has placed him facing St. Dominic in the foreground of his Coronation of Mary. They kneel on a lower plane than that where the Madonna and our Lord are seated, and behind them martyrs, apostles and doctors of the Church gaze in rapture at the pearly heavens above them, where Christ crowns His Blessed Mother.

But it was Fra Angelico's pupil, Benozzo Gozzoli, who made Francis the subject of a series of pictures designed, like the frescoes of Giotto, to record the incidents of his life,

A Franciscan church had been built at Montefalco, a "city set upon a hill," which glows in the sunset light, disappearing from view at noon if our eyes seek it towards the south-east from Assisi. The friars may have communicated with Fra Angelico, who was at Orvieto in 1452. He sent Benozzo Gozzoli to do the work. Gozzoli had been painting for five years, but was still under the influence of his master, not yet, as seven years later, feeling his own temperament and giving scope to its artistic impulses.

So the frescoes at Montefalco are of simple design, even clumsy when compared with Giotto's, which were so much earlier.

He could not compass Fra Angelico's stately lines, his purity of conception sufficing without detail. So, although he gives a pleasant animation to the scenes and delightful colouring, they lack both the tenderness of Giotto's frescoes and the wealth of homely and natural detail which distinguishes his own later masterpieces at the Riccardi Palace and in the Pisan Campo Santo. His pictures at Montefalco are seventeen in the biographical series, and figures of the first companions round the arch of the choir. They follow Giotto's sequence, but include a blessing of Montefalco by the saint, which may very well have happened in his life-time. In the fresco of Francis preaching to the birds near Bevagna, he put a background of Monte Subasio and Assisi.

In the portraits round the choir arch he makes

the number of first companions twelve, for by his time the analogy between Christ's life on earth and that of the patriarch was a Franciscan dogma.

Nine years later Benozzo Gozzoli painted a small easel picture for the Compagnia di San Marco in Florence, which is now in our National Gallery. Its Madonna is a copy of that painted by Fra Angelico for the high altar-piece of San Marco, now to be seen in the Academy of Florence. But he gave rein to his delight in natural details, and painted St. Francis kneeling amongst sweet flowers such as Francis loved.

Later in the century, about 1485, Ghirlandajo painted a beautiful set of pictures in the Sassetti Chapel of the Church of the Trinity in Florence, having the life of Francis for their subject, of which the death scene is considered to be finest, although his presentation of the Rule of 1223 to Pope Honorius is quite as impressive, and Mrs. Jameson selects Francis before the Soldan for special notice.

About the same time Benedetto da Majano executed the reliefs round the pulpit of Santa Croce.

A chapel was built by San Bonaventura over the infirmary hut where Francis died, and its walls were decorated early in the sixteenth century with figures of the first friars by Lo Spagna. About the same date the altar was furnished with a beautiful terra-cotta figure of Francis by Andrea della Robbia,

which is, perhaps, the only really artistic presentment of the saint at Santa Maria degli Angeli. It has been photographed by Signor Lunghi, and Miss Duff Gordon uses it as a frontispiece to her charming *Story of Assisi*.

Far nobler, however, is the splendid statue of St. Francis belonging to the fifteenth century which is on the high altar of Sant' Antonio in Padua. Donatello was its sculptor, and placed it on the right of our Lord and St. Antonio of Padua on His left, a group so magnificent that its impression on the mind can never be erased.

After the beginning of the sixteenth century Lo Spagna, a pupil of Perugino's, Garofalo, Agostino Carracci and Cigoli were the chief painters of Franciscan subjects, and of these Garofalo and Carracci were the best. The former decorated San Francesco at Ferrara with a series about 1520. A Madonna enthroned by Garofalo, which once decorated the high altar of San Guglielmo in Ferrara, is now in our National Gallery, and the saints in attendance on Mary are Francis, Antony of Padua, Clare and St. William, who was a Brother of Penitence.

Agostino Carracci painted the finest example known of the Stigmata, a subject popular with painters of the sixteenth and later centuries, and especially with Cigoli and the great Spanish master Zurburan. Carracci's picture is at Vienna, but is well known from engravings. Zurburan's examples are full of the gloomy rendering of suffering observ-

STATUE OF FRANCIS BY DONATELLO

In the Church of S. Antonio, Padua

able in Spanish pictures. Many others might be noted, for St. Francis is patron of many cities and localities besides Umbria and Assisi in Umbria. Cloth-weavers and menders, carpet-makers and other cognate crafts adopted him as their protector. But this brief chapter may do no more than suggest the subject. The Franciscan art of recent centuries lacks the ardent faith which gave value to the earlier pictures.

Perhaps, seeing that our age has a new revelation of the spirit of St. Francis, we may hope for a new conception and a new artistic presentment of his ideal, his failure, his coming victory.

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